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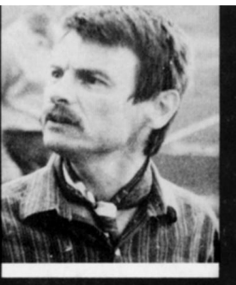

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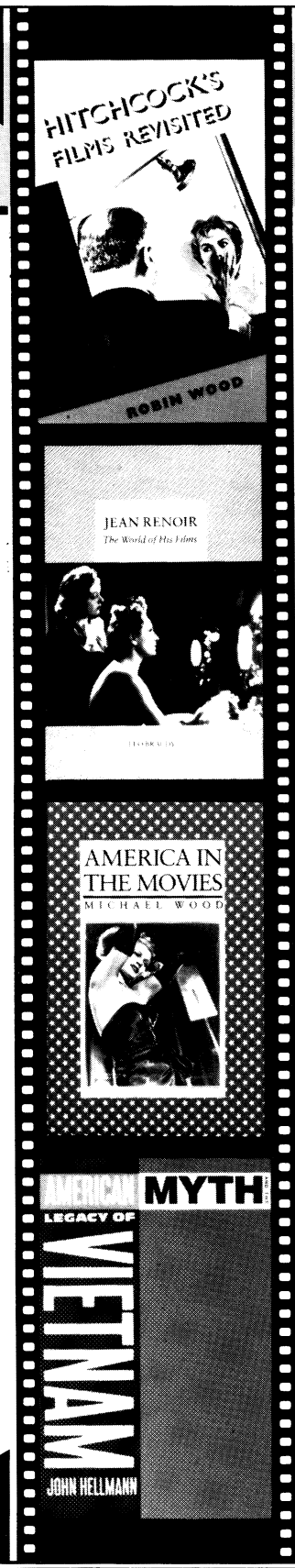

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Cover (top) Andrej Tarkovsky on location for *The Mirror* (1975-78); (bottom) Rosie Perez as Tina and Spike Lee as Mookie in *Do the Right Thing* (see page 35).

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Film Quarterly
Vol. 43, No. 2 [pp. 2-16]
The Subversive Potential of the Pseudo-Iterative

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How Green Was My Valley

The *iterative* was introduced into contemporary narrative theory by French narratologist Gerard Genette in his ground-breaking work *Narrative Discourse,* where he considers "*narrative frequency,* that is, the relations of frequency (or, more simply, of repetition) between the narrative and the diegesis," which, he claims is "one of the main aspects of narrative temporality." He describes the iterative as a type of narrative "where a single narrative utterance takes upon itself several occurrences together of the same event (in other words, . . . several events considered only in terms of their analogy)"—as in the example, "every day of the week I went to bed early." Genette acknowledges that the *identity* of these multiple occurrences is debatable (i.e., that each instance of going to bed has its unique variations) and "that the 'repetition' is in fact a mental construction, which eliminates from each occurrence everything belonging to it that is peculiar to itself, in order to preserve only what it shares with all the others of the same class, which is an abstraction." Nevertheless, he defines the iterative as "*narrating one time* (or rather: *at one time*) *what happened n times*"; as opposed to narrating one time what happened one time (the *singulative*—as in the example, "Yesterday, I went to bed early,"); or narrating n times what happened n times (the *anaphoric,* as in "Monday I went to bed early, Tuesday I went to bed early, Wednesday I went to bed early, etc.," which is merely a multiple form of the singulative); or narrating n times what happened one time (the *repeating* narrative, as in "Yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early").[1]

Marsha Kinder

The Subversive Potential of the Pseudo-Iterative

Usually signalled in verbal discourse by the use of the imperfect tense ("I used to go to bed early") and normally limited to a subordinate descriptive function in classical literary narrative, the iterative aspect, according to Genette, can be traced all the way back to Homer, but was first liberated from "functional dependence" by Flaubert in *Madame Bovary* and most fully expanded "in textual scope, in thematic importance and in degree of technical elaboration" by Proust in *A la Recherche du temps perdu* where it becomes a key component of his radical innovation. What I intend to do in this essay is to explore how the elaboration of the iterative functions in filmic narrative and the filmic means by which it is signalled, particularly in works that attempt to make a radical break from existing narrative conventions.

The Pseudo-Iterative in Hollywood Classical Cinema

Although Genette's elaboration of the iterative is commonly assumed to be one of his most important contributions to narrative theory, there has been surprisingly little application of this concept to cinema. A notable exception is Brian Henderson's essay, "Tense, Mood, and Voice in Film (Notes after Genette)," in which he attempts to describe how the iterative functions in classical Hollywood cinema in contrast to classical literary narrative. After noting that "in classical cinema, as in the classical novel, the iterative nearly always has an information or background function subordinate to singulative scenes," Henderson perceptively observes that what is far more central to cinema than to literature is the "pseudo-iterative"—an unusual mode that Genette finds in Proust and that he defines as "scenes presented, particularly by their wording in the imperfect, as iterative, whereas their richness and precision of detail ensure that no reader can seriously believe they occur and reoccur in that manner, several times, without any variation" (Genette, p. 121). Henderson notes:

> This happens occasionally in Proust; in cinema it is pervasive because 'richness and precision of detail' seem to be inherent in photography and sound recording, at least in those practices of them engaged by most films.[2]

Pursuing his comparison of the ways the iterative functions in cinema as opposed to literature, Henderson describes the opening scene from *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), where Huw's voice-over first establishes the iterative mode through his description of a typical day and through his repeated use of the word "would" (e.g., "Someone would strike up a song and the valley would ring with the sound of many voices . . . ") and then slips almost imperceptibly into the singulative ("It was on this afternoon that I first met Bron . . ."). Henderson observes:

> Most interesting, theoretically, is how and why such a slippage is possible in cinematic iterative; it would not be in literary narrative. Are the images neutrally either iterative or singulative, depending upon a voice-over to define their temporal status? If so, then the continuity of the images may sustain us

through a shift in tense, while the changed verbal tense tells us how to read the images. (Henderson, pp. 11–12)

Genette interprets analogous slippages in Proust (i.e., when he "inadvertently lets a necessarily singulative *passé simple* into the middle of a scene presented as iterative") as "so many signs that the writer himself sometimes 'lives' such scenes with an intensity that makes him forget the distinction of aspects." Rather than seeing them as a conscious artistic strategy, Genette reads them as "confusions" that "reflect in Proust a sort of *intoxication with the iterative*" (p. 123)—an intoxication that presumably is transmitted to the reader. I would argue that the particular form of pseudo-iterative that operates in classical Hollywood cinema generates in the spectator an *intoxication with the singulative* —an intoxication which uses iterative implications to naturalize the singulative and which renders the slippage between the two aspects invisible.

But this explanation doesn't really address Henderson's question of why subtler slippages are possible in classical cinema in contrast to classical literature. One could argue that (even beyond the issue of fictional reference within the diegesis) the specific nature of the cinematic apparatus constructs an inevitable slippage between the singulative and the iterative, which are established and associated respectively with the stages of production and exhibition. That is, in front of the camera and microphone, the footage seemingly speaks in the singulative, either in the present tense or in the simple past by capturing and embalming the present moment ("this event is happening now as it is being recorded," or "this event happened in front of the camera and microphone"). In the theater at the point of exhibition and reception (and even during the post-production stage, where a single utterance may be constructed out of multiple takes), the footage of images and sounds recorded in the past could be read as speaking in the iterative: ("the event now being uttered/projected used to occur while this scene was being shot and in all previous projections"). In a discourse that tries to efface all traces of this dual system, such as Hollywood classical cinema, the emphasis is primarily on the singulative and on the illusory construction of a present tense; references to the past tend to be clearly marked out by voice-overs and/or flashbacks, as in the example Henderson cites from *How Green Was My Valley*.

One could also argue that the slippage into the iterative is more easily accomplished in cinema because, unlike the sentence, the film utterance is initially atemporal and its tense is therefore established contextually by discourse. That is, the film utterance is not *required* to have a tense and therefore (unlike the literary utterance) there is not always a clearly established tense for the iterative to suspend or displace. On the other hand, as Edward Branigan has pointed out, spatial relations in the film utterance must be clearly defined (that is, the camera must be *somewhere*).[4] This might suggest that in cinema there is a tendency to spatialize the iterative—i.e., to use spatial relations to generate iterative implications of frequency.

Thus, I would argue that it is not only voice-overs that can redefine the aspect of frequency of any cinematic image or scene, especially those involving spatial relations and representations of typicality, but also other stylistic operations within a narrative. In classical Hollywood cinema, it's the iterative aspect that tends to remain hidden; and that's why, as Henderson observes, when the iterative aspect is acknowledged, it is nearly always subordinated as mere descriptive background to what appear to be singulative events, whose distinguishing details are frequently accentuated by close-ups, editing codes of continuity (such as shot-reverse shot), or foregrounding of linear plot structure. This emphasis is hardly surprising since, as Genette observes, the singulative form of narrative is "so common, and apparently considered so 'normal' that it bears no name" (p. 114); that's why he coins the neologism *singulative*. Thus, it's the singulative nature of cinema that always tends to be foregrounded in classical cinema, even when those singular events take on what I would call an "iterative implication." This implication suggests that this particular narrative is a single telling of a class of events that habitually or typically occur in this set of circumstances, period, or culture—a dimension that is consistent with Aristotelian norms of probability and strongly reinforced by the normative power of popular Hollywood genres. Yet because this iterative aspect is only implicit (and somewhat analogical rather than strictly grammatical) and the precision of rich detail literally foregrounded, "some [as Henderson cautiously observes] might

take an ultra-literal position and say that this makes the iterative impossible in cinema; its images and sounds are always singulative" (p. 12).

I am arguing precisely the opposite position: namely, that the iterative is inherent in cinema, either through the pseudo-iterative (as defined by Genette and modified by Henderson, where there is an explicit acknowledgement that the event is presented in the iterative aspect despite the rich perceptual detail in the image), or through the iterative implication (where the acknowledgement of the iterative repetition is only implicit and positioned within a scene presented as singulative). One might reasonably object at this point that my usage of the term *iterative* may have moved too far away from its strictly grammatical usage in *Narrative Discourse*, yet Genette himself acknowledges that his grammatical terms "are merely borrowed" and that he makes "no pretense of basing them on rigorous homologies" (p. 32).

Genette confines the iterative to temporal relations and to utterances about past events. Yet by acknowledging that iterative repetition depends on the mental construction of a class (or paradigm) of similar instances, he opens a space within the iterative for the issue of typicality. Since temporality, as we have seen, is not foregrounded in film the way it is in literature, I am arguing that it is this issue of typicality that is usually foregrounded by the iterative in cinema. Within Hollywood classical cinema, the combination of rich perceptual detail and strong emphasis on genre not only generates iterative implications, but also uses them to naturalize the singulative event. The combination suggests that this particular narrative utterance is realistic or truthful in the sense of being habitual, typical, or inevitable, while the determination (the diachronic limits of the series) and the specification (of how frequently it occurs) are significantly left indefinite. Often a classical film will begin with scenes depicting normal, typical actions, from which the singulative narrative will soon deviate; though such scenes are technically presented in the singulative, they carry iterative implications (particularly through spatial relations) that are extended to the singulative plot.

Two brief examples should suffice. *Duel in the Sun* (1946) opens with an extravagant prologue, in which a lushly colored landscape and over-blown literary voice-over boldly place the story of Pearl Chavez in the mythic past. Although we are told that this legend and the figurative stone that commemorates it have withstood the test of time, it's the dramatic setting (rather than the particular moment) that is truly singular. Pearl's uniqueness is explicitly symbolized by a rare cactus flower that blooms every year, but only here in this unique space where she and her lover died. Though clearly presented as extraordinary, this opening supposedly depicts what happened many times (the blooming of the flower, the survival of the stone, the telling of her story). Yet, this prologue arouses our curiosity not about these repetitions (which are only the background), but about the dramatic climax—the death of "the wild young lovers"—which already occurred in the past, but toward which the singulative narrative will inevitably be moving.

Once inside the story, we are immediately confronted with the same conflation of the habitual action with the extraordinary singulative event. We move directly to a close shot of the young Pearl as she dances seductively for a group of youngsters outside the Presidio, and then inside where her mother is doing a similar dance for scores of men and where her father is losing at cards ("broke again?") and being humiliated by the other players ("he's not so fancy about his wife"). By being introduced to these characters through these actions, we assume that they perform them every night, yet simultaneously we realize that this night will lead to a singulative climax. Both dancers are ap-

Duel in the Sun: slippage from the iterative scene inside the dancehall to . . . →

. . . the singulative story of Pearl's father and mother.

proached by a man who makes the iterative trace between them explicit (telling Pearl, "like mother, like daughter") and who triggers the slippage into the singulative (by kissing Pearl's mother in front of her husband and by taking her off to make love). While implying the previous series, this single utterance explicitly depicts only the *final* humiliation, which leads Pearl's father to shoot his wife and her lover as Pearl and we look on, intoxicated with the singulative. Yet the prologue enables us to see the iterative implications in this action: to realize that Pearl met a fate similar to her mother's, and to read both of these framing melodramatic climaxes as probable, inevitable, foretold.

A Place in the Sun (1951) opens with a longshot of a hitchhiker with a suitcase trying to thumb a ride from a passing car on a curved highway. It's a familiar image we all recognize, although the time, place and character are ambiguous. At first we can't see him very well because he has his back to the camera and his body is partially covered by the opening titles which appear over this scene. But, because of his suitcase, we assume he has hitchhiked a long way, and that this filmic utterance is meant to depict an action that has been repeated along many different stretches of highway. Gradually, as the titles conclude, he backs toward the camera in the foreground. As soon as he turns around, this image ceases to function as background and slips into the singulative: for we recognize the extraordinary face of the young Montgomery Clift and the camera moves in for a tight, fully lit close-up of his half smile as something unusual captures his attention. Then there's a cut to the object of his gaze—an outdoor poster of a glamor girl, with the headline, "It's an Eastman." At that very moment a horn from a passing car draws his attention back to the road just in time to see Elizabeth Taylor (who turns out to be his rich cousin, an Eastman) driving by in a Cadillac convertible. The contrived convergence of image, name, and vehicle prefigure the inevitable conclusion toward which the singulative linear narrative will be driving. Like the roadside collision of Oedipus and Laius, this coincidence appears to be predestined. It expresses the young man's intoxication with the singulative assumptions of romance: the belief that she's the love of his life, his single chance for happiness, his missed opportunity—a belief that will lead him to consider murder. But now this elusive object of desire drives out of sight and, as if awakened from his revery, he goes over to the dilapidated truck that has stopped to give him a ride. In this opening, the contrast between typicality and singulative romance is figured as a choice between two narrative vehicles (the truck that could have driven out of *Grapes of Wrath* and the glamorous convertible that belongs to bourgeois melodrama) and between the long-shot and the large facial close-up. The narrative will constantly maneuver between these two modes, using the iterative traces of drab typicality to intensify the desirability of the singulative romance.

Although (unlike *How Green Was My Valley*) neither of these openings uses the pseudo-iterative, they still use iterative implications to naturalize the linear drive of the narrative and to intensify the intoxication with the singulative. Yet the slippage between the iterative and the singulative remains barely visible.

But if the iterative implications and the slippage between the two aspects were ever foregrounded, then they would potentially call attention to the process of naturalizing ideology through the reading of singulative events of fiction as universal truth, a reading that reinforces the dominant cultural paradigms and genres. This is precisely what happens in a wide range of films where the narrative experimentation is designed to make a sharp break from the prevailing conventions of narrative discourse.

In the rest of this essay, I will explore a few examples of how such foregrounding functions in two

quite different filmic contexts: Italian neorealism, where narrative discourse was intentionally distinguished from the dominant practice of Hollywood classical cinema; and the radical feminist avant-garde of the late 1970s and 80s, where one of the primary goals of narrative experimentation was to subvert the sadistic drive of the oedipal plot, that key master narrative of Western patriarchal culture.[5] I will argue that, despite the striking differences in the historical, cultural and stylistic contexts of these two kinds of subversive film practice, the specific texts under analysis all use the foregrounded slippage between iterative and singulative to undermine the linear drive of the narrative and to retrain the spectator for a more attentive, speculative reading of richly detailed images and sounds. In these analyses, I do not mean to exaggerate the stylistic unity of these two contexts or to suggest that either of them functions as a monolithic entity; rather, I merely want to sketch some broad stylistic tendencies in their usage and signalling of the iterative aspect of narrative.

Italian Neorealism: The Pseudo-Iterative as Narrative Rupture in *Umberto D* and *Il Posto*

Within the neorealist aesthetic, rich photographic detail frequently functions to express, not the singulative (as in Hollywood classical cinema), but the iterative. Although the iterative is sometimes signalled by voice-overs (as in films like *La Terra Trema, Paisà,* and *Amore in città*), it more typically is marked by visual operations, particularly through spatial determinations.[4] The referential interplay between the singulative event and the paradigm it represents is frequently played out spatially in terms of foreground and background. Yet, the iterative background is not merely "descriptive" or subordinate as in Hollywood classical cinema, but at least co-equal, normative, and determinant in ideological terms—relations that can be established by spatial or temporal continuity through depth composition or long takes punctuated by ellipses. Individuals and their actions are chosen precisely because they are representative and typical in an iterative sense; the anonymous characters in the background are not used merely as a backdrop against which to distinguish the singularity of the protagonist (a singularity which then is invisibly transformed into a norm as in classical Hollywood cinema), but rather as a means of explicitly acknowledging the iterative aspect and the slippage between it and the singulative dimensions of this particular occurrence within the series.

For example, the singular protagonists of De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* and *Umberto D* are introduced within a crowd, from which they are visibly selected for foregrounding during an habitual event (a daily hiring of workers, or one of the frequent impromptu demonstrations in postwar Rome). Yet it's the typicality of these characters and their events that are valued and repeatedly emphasized, not their singularity. Similarly, the multiple protagonists of Rossellini's *Open City* and *Paisà* emerge from events involving large numbers of people, events that are already in progress and that are presumed to be illustrative of a common series that frequently occurred during a specific historical period in a specific location. The precision of detail in the image helps identify the paradigm to which the particular characters and events belong; the long take and depth focus, and even the montage structure at the opening of *Umberto D* and *Shoeshine,* continue to acknowledge the connection between the individual and the paradigm, between the singulative and the iterative aspects.

Umberto D (1951)

The use of visual codes to express the neorealist intoxication with the pseudo-iterative and to control the slippage between the iterative and the singulative can be demonstrated in a celebrated sequence from *Umberto D,* which is frequently cited as the "purest" example of the neorealist aesthetic. The sequence where the pregnant maid does her morning chores seems to contribute nothing whatever to the advancement of the narrative line; rather, it merely presents her ordinary daily moves. Bazin calls it "a perfect illustration of [the DeSica-Zavattini] approach to narrative, . . . the exact opposite of that 'art of ellipsis' . . . [which] presupposes analysis and choice." He defines it as "the succession of concrete instants of life, no one of which can be said to be more important than another, for their ontological equality destroys drama at its very basis."[6]

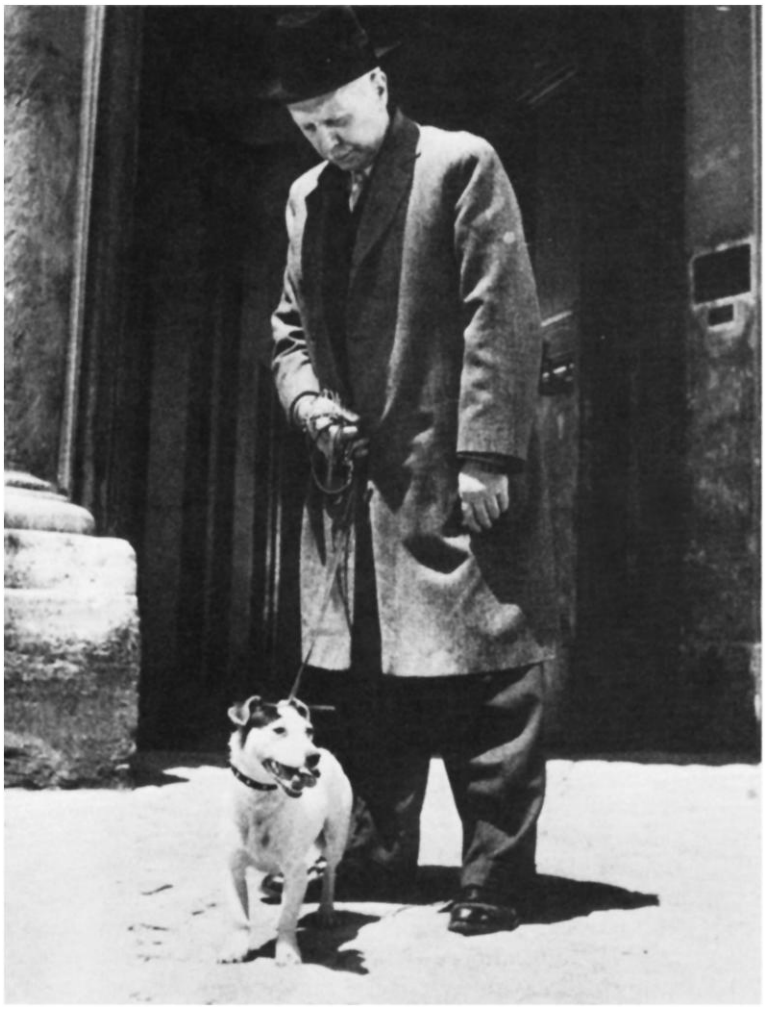
By presenting the maid's ordinary morning routines, this totally nonverbal sequence clearly foregrounds the iterative. Yet, perhaps even more important for my argument here, it also trains the spectator in how to read the familiar moves both of the maid and of the camera and editing and to thereby deduce what she is probably thinking. Moreover, these cognitive tasks will be required later in the two singulative events that *are* crucial to the narrative line—the two moments when the old man Umberto contemplates suicide. Thus, in this sense, the sequence *does* contribute to the narrative by renegotiating the relationship between the iterative and the singulative, a relationship which proves essential to our understanding of what happens in the film.

In the representation of this particular morning our attention is first drawn to the old man Umberto who stands in the foreground, phoning the ambulance to take him away to the hospital, arranging a singulative event that will distinguish this day from all others. The maid appears behind him in the background, as part of the ordinary context against which Umberto's singulative event is to be read. When the film cuts to the maid, lying on her back in bed, there is a noticeable slippage to the iterative, which now takes over the foreground. Her ordinary morning routines fill in the time (or temporal gap in the narrative) that it takes the ambulance to come for Umberto. As Bazin suggests, this sequence rejects narrative ellipsis.

Yet Bazin fails to notice that the way her actions are represented visually is not always consistent with what we normally identify as the neorealist aesthetic. For example, this sequence does not rely on the long take, but has at least seventeen intra-sequence cuts. In the very first shot, the maid rubs her eyes, drawing our attention to her gaze. Then there's a cut to the object of her gaze—an upward angle longshot of a cat walking across the roof seen through a screen-like surface with a striking graphic design. This shot stands out, not because it depicts an unusual event (undoubtedly, like the maid, the cat is pursuing its daily morning routines), but because the almost abstract formalism of the visuals is not characteristic of the neorealist aesthetic. This shot is followed by a cut back to the maid, which then moves in closer to her gaze, anchoring it firmly within the suturing structure (shot/reverse shot/shot) normally associated with classical Hollywood cinema. This suture works toward the kind of emotional identification that is also typical of DeSica and Zavattini. Then the camera follows the maid into the kitchen where we see her performing a number of household tasks in a series of long and medium shots more typical of neorealism. Three shots later there is a medium shot of her through the window, and then she and the camera move toward each other, a convergence which again calls our attention both to her gaze and to our own. The reverse shot reveals the object of her gaze in an exterior longshot—a white cat walking along the slanted roof, evoking the earlier more abstract image of the cat through the screen, and then there's a cut back to her gaze through the window.

Despite Bazin's claims that no one instant in this sequence is more important than any other, the formal repetition (of the shot/reverse shot suture, of the camera moving in closer to her gaze, and of the cat imagery) privileges these two moments. This repeated pattern leads us not only to identify with the young maid, but also to speculate on her thoughts: perhaps she, too, is identifying with the feline, envying its freedom, particularly in light of her pregnant condition. This hypothesis is strengthened a little later when she looks down at her slightly swollen belly, and the camera moves in tighter, almost to a close-up of her face, which reveals her eyes blinking, as if to ward off the tears that will appear a few moments later. What's really at stake here is not whether we reach a "correct" interpretation of what she is thinking, but rather that we learn how to read the phenomenology of her moves and how to recognize the filmic codes that elicit such speculations.

All three of the visual codes that have been foregrounded in this sequence through repetition—the shot/reverse shot suture, the striking camera movement (or zoom) that closes in on the gaze, and the accelerated tempo of the cutting—are used again later (and intensified through the accompaniment of dramatic non-diegetic music) in the two melodramatic sequences, where Umberto considers suicide: first, when he stands at his window staring at the streetcar tracks below, and finally, when he carries his dog to the railroad tracks and nearly lunges in the path of an on-coming train. In both



Umberto D

cases he is prevented from acting out his suicidal impulse by the presence of the dog, another inarticulate creature (like the cat in the maid's morning sequence, or like the anonymous poor backgrounded by the narrative) whose readable gestures serve as the basis of emotional identification for spectators trained by the neorealist aesthetic. If we are *un*able to read these silent moves and gestures (or what Pasolini would later call *im-signs*), then we prove to be less trainable than Umberto's clever little mutt whose ability to decipher these nonverbal signs saves both himself and his master.

Il Posto (1961)

The spectatorial retraining function of the neorealist pseudo-iterative is perhaps most notable in Ermanno Olmi's *Il Posto (The Job,* aka *The Sound of Trumpets,* 1961). Unlike the earlier classics within the movement, this latter-day neorealist work documents, not the economic failure of the poor, but rather the "successful" entry of a timid young man from a Lombardy suburb into the dehumanizing world of bureaucracy in Milan—"that city" which (we are told in an opening title) "is primarily a place to work." Not only is Domenico's typicality underlined by this title and by the scores of other young people who surround him at work, in the busy streets of Milan, or in his own suburban tenement, but at one point in this fairly conventional linear narrative there is a dramatic rupture that marks a sudden slippage into the iterative—a rupture that is far more blatant than the maid sequence in *Umberto D.*

Up to that point the narrative has consistently followed the inarticulate Domenico, leading us to focus on his closely observed movements and to read his facial expressions and gestures (almost as if we were watching a silent film). Now it presents a series of brief elliptical scenes (linked by dissolves) which show how five clerks from one office typically spend their evenings: working on a novel, cultivating a dashing appearance, retaining vestigial possessions from a lost aristocratic past, singing arias at a cafe, interacting with a difficult son. Ironically, though these scenes differentiate the clerks by revealing the various ways in which they try to preserve their individual identity, the narrative form in which they are presented suggests an illustrative montage, which stresses the typicality rather than the uniqueness of the behavior depicted. Depending on how one sees its articulation with the scene that introduces it, this sequence could be read either as what Genette calls the *generalizing, external iteration,* where an iterative passage within a singulative scene "opens a window onto the external period," or as the *internal, synthesizing iteration,* where there is an "enumeration of a certain number of classes of occurrences, each of which synthesizes several events . . . not over a wider period of time, but over the period of time of the scene itself" (pp. 118–119).

The series is introduced by a conversation in the office between two co-workers who are speculating about a near-sighted clerk, calling him "a sneaky type." Then there's a cut to that same clerk at home alone in his sparsely furnished room, laboring over a manuscript. When his landlady spies on him through a keyhole, she admits that she's unable to tell what kind of writing he's doing ("God knows what he's writing!") but she does identify the activity as iterative by explicitly telling us that he does

it every night. The voyeuristic motivation for the scene, its minimalism and ambiguity, its emphasis on interpretation, its punctuating dissolves—all raise the additional possibility that this scene may represent not what the near-sighted clerk *actually* does on that or any other specific night, but rather merely a reasonable speculation.

By the time we reach the fifth scene, where the middle-aged woman clerk discovers her wallet is empty and painfully concludes that she's been robbed by her son, the narrative seems to have slipped back to the singulative, preparing us for the cut back to the office where the camera pans across the other clerks as they stare at the same poor woman who sits at her desk silently weeping. This narrative continuity tends to anchor this particular elliptical scene temporally, locating it specifically during the previous night, but still leaving ambiguous whether the scenes of the other four clerks also took place during that same night, or whether the scene leading into the montage (the co-workers speculating about the "sneaky" near-sighted clerk) occurred on the same day as the scene that followed it. Yet, since we learned in an earlier scene that this same woman had previously been late to work three times this month (presumably because of similar problems with her son), even this specific incident could be read as merely one typical illustration of what causes her daily misery.

This disruptive sequence of elliptical scenes is evoked again near the end of the film, when there's a direct cut from the gaiety of a New Year's Eve party to the silent panning across the same clerks as they grimly stare at the empty desk of their near-sighted co-worker, and then to a montage of artistic stills of his empty room, linked by dissolves. Not only does this dramatic rupture signify death (both in the narrative and in the linear structure of a man's life), it also creates an opening for the protagonist Domenico, which allows him to advance from messenger boy to clerk. Thus, this rupture helps to transform our reading of the film—from the singulative story of a young white-collar worker finding his place in the world, to an iterative account of the recurring cycle in which workers struggle to maintain their humanity within a dehumanizing bureaucracy, a cycle which is part of Italy's so-called economic miracle. This rupture also exposes the narrative gaps that have been there all along (e.g., the stories of minor characters or losers, like the married man who failed the examination and didn't get the job). It also brings to mind earlier montage sequences in the film, like the montage of urban construction that is part of the literal background for Domenico's and Antonietta's lunch break in the city and also the historical background of industrialization, which proves more instrumental than the narrative in determining their future. And, on a more abstract level, it also reveals the structural similarity between ellipses and montage (which had always been so ambiguous in Bazin's treatment of Rossellini and the neorealist aesthetic).

The blatancy of the iterative dimension in these narrative ruptures also calls attention to the more subtle iterative implications in other more conventional sequences—i.e., to the various ways in which characters and actions are positioned within paradigms and repetitive cycles. For example, we see how Domenico's interaction with the cold patriarchal boss and his warm, mediating maternal secretary echoes his relationship with his parents. We perceive how the spatial arrangement of the rows of clerks facing their supervisor duplicates the classroom hierarchy between students and teacher. We recognize traces of the dehumanizing fascist aesthetic in the over-sized scale of the corporate lobby, with its rigid rules (only four to an elevator) and uniformed staff (someone even jokingly asks Domenico whether he's a member of the Gestapo). We recall the book-strap that Domenico is forced to pass down to his younger brother in the opening sequence, or his careful observance of other customers in the coffee bar to learn how to tip and what to do with his cup, or his watching through the window to see how the previous group of applicants is responding to the physical exam.

By specularizing this iterative aspect, the film reminds us that we also learn such conventions from watching movies. Even *Il Posto* is self-consciously positioned within the paradigm of neorealism, but with its historical "difference" duly noted. In one scene an old man enters the corporate building, having mistaken it for the welfare office. When he asks for the office that gives out money to the poor, he's told he's in the wrong building. He could just as easily have been told that he's in the wrong movie, for clearly he belongs in a neorealist classic like *Bicycle Thief* or *Umberto D.* Yet it's

easy to understand his error because the architecture (of the corporate building and welfare office) and the film aesthetic (of *Il Posto* and neorealist classics) look very similar.

The neorealist classic that is singled out for specific comparison is quite properly *Umberto D,* which helped to mark the end of the movement as well as its entry into the world of middle-class white-collar workers. *Il Posto* recycles many images that are found in *Umberto D:* the cafeteria with its cheap food, the niggardly landlady who harasses the lonely bureaucrat, and the old man with a small dog riding on a streetcar. In one sequence, when the young applicants are being led down the street in an orderly line, an old man with a dog asks what is going on. When Domenico tells him it's for a job, the old man remarks, "That's a laugh!" We can't help but be reminded of the retired bureaucrat Umberto, who knows from bitter experience that disappointment awaits these prospective white-collar workers. Yet while he probably thinks it has to do with material conditions like inadequate pensions, here the problem is seen as the dehumanization of the individual. Such a view can also be found in the silent comedies of Chaplin and Keaton, many of whose conventions are also absorbed in *Il Posto* and whose basic humanism was seen by Bazin as compatible with neorealism. Thus, *Il Posto* is not merely an updated version of *Umberto D;* rather, it offers a different analysis of the problems, one that extends ever further back to the beginnings of both cinema and industrialization. In this way, the film's intertextuality (both with neorealism and American silent comedy) names the paradigm to which the film belongs and becomes another means of marking a slippage into the iterative.

In such a reading of the film, there is no need for narrative closure. Thus, we are not disappointed that we never find out whether Domenico gets the girl or gets ahead to the front row. What we see represented is one man's entry and another's exit from the same subject position, which has been constructed by the economic system of postwar Italy. The linearity of the narrative is shown to be merely an illusion of progress, of getting ahead. This reading is underscored by the emblematic ending, where the "personal" belongings (including the unread life work) of the dead clerk are carelessly tossed aside while another worker turns the handle of a mimeograph machine, producing identical copies from a single master. As we see a large facial close-up of Domenico, blinking with discomfort in his new post, and then see the film title *Il Posto* (which in Italian refers both to the "position" and to the victorious sound of trumpets) superimposed on his face, we hear the repetitive droning of the mimeograph machine. The extreme length of the close-up gives us time to speculate on what the young man may be thinking: perhaps, that this is a sound, not of economic triumph, but of spiritual defeat.

In these sequences from *Umberto D* and *Il Posto,* the neorealist *intoxication with the iterative* immerses the spectator, not in the emotional intensity of personal memory as in Proust, but in the ideological relations between individual and collective experience.

The spatial arrangement of the rows of desks facing the supervisor duplicates the classroom hierarchy between students and teachers

The Feminist Avant-Garde: The Pseudo-Iterative as Semiotic Transgression in *Toute une nuit*

The radical experimentation in Chantal Akerman's *Toute une nuit* (1982) goes much further in deconstructing traditional narrative and in revealing how the slippage between the iterative and the singulative helps to naturalize dominant ideology. The film challenges, not only woman's position in narrative, but also the very structure of narrative and language, for they are the primary signifying systems that have held women in captivity under patriarchy by making their subordination seem natural and inevitable rather than culturally inscribed.

Instead of leading us into emotional identification with the characters on screen, the film enables us to see that, as in all movies, the specific images and sounds have been selected from familiar cultural paradigms and combined to generate narratives. In *Toute une nuit* we find the traditional vocabulary and moves of the melodramatic narrative: the rendezvous, separations and reunions, the romantic triangles, balcony scenes and slow dances, the taxis, telephones, and cigarettes, the waiting women and even waiting men—in short, the problems of the couple. Yet there is no driving linear thrust and no climactic "big bang" resolutions. Instead, these familiar components are positioned within a comfortably paced, rhythmic cycle of recurrence that grants us plenty of time for the perceptual pleasure of savoring the painterly visuals (with their strong graphic compositions and lush colors) and the rich textures of sound and image (with their unpredictable rhythms). And also plenty of time for the conceptual pleasure of enjoying the wit and of figuring out how these components are connected.

The title, *Toute une nuit* (a whole night), immediately foregrounds the dual axes of selection and combination—those linchpins of Saussurian and Jakobsonian semiotics. On the one hand, the title designates a temporal unit based on a natural cycle, night and day (a primordial opposition like male and female). Yet, since the film is only 91 minutes long, there must be omissions, so the artistic process of human selection (which is necessarily culturally coded) is also involved. While the *toute* stresses the illusion of unity and completeness, the indefinite article *une* acknowledges the selection of one discrete unit from the paradigm.

Both Roman Jakobson and Roland Barthes recognized that the reversal of these axes of selection and combination is a form of "semiotic transgression" with great subversive potential. According to Barthes,

> It is probably around this transgression that a great number of creative phenomena are situated, as if perhaps there were here a junction between the field of aesthetics and the defections from the semantic system. The chief transgression is obviously the extension of a paradigm on to the syntagmatic plane, since normally only one term of the operation is actualized, the other (or others) remaining potential: this is what would happen, broadly speaking, if one attempted to elaborate a discourse by putting one after the other all the terms of the same declension.[7]

In *Toute une nuit* Akerman commits this "semiotic transgression" by reversing the two axes of selection and combination. Instead of selecting units from different paradigms and combining them together in a linear fashion to create a story, she strings together units from the same paradigm, thereby extending a paradigm on to the syntagmatic plane. This transgression reveals the grammar of melodrama and its naturalized slippage from the singulative to the iterative and frustrates the conventional demand for the linear drive of the story.

The opening montage immediately foregrounds the cinematic process of selection and combination. It selects and combines images—of a street, traffic, a fence, a woman walking, a man going downstairs, someone getting on a streetcar, a car driving toward the camera, its headlights beaming, a very young couple huddling together inside—and sounds of traffic, of a pop song on the radio, of footsteps. These typical sights and sounds of a city at night are mobile units of signification that will be recombined in a variety of ways to generate mini-stories in the 90 minutes that follow. We don't yet know whether this is documentary footage of ordinary people or actors performing in a fiction. We don't yet understand the connections between the shots—if the couple in the vehicle is in any way connected to the woman walking or to the man descending the stairs. Yet the formal structure of the editing leads

us to consider such connections. This opening also strongly evokes the iterative—or more specifically, what Genette calls "the synthesizing iteration," where the scene is "synthesized by a sort of paradigmatic classification of the events composing it" (pp. 118–119). The brief scenes are presented in such a way as to suggest that these or similar events occur every night—an aspect that was already implicit in the title *Toute une nuit* and that will be intensified in the sequences that follow by having so many different sets of characters of different ages, gender, and class perform similar moves. Thus the film demonstrates the iterative's subtle slippage, not only with the singulative, but also with the anaphoric (narrating n times what happens n times) and the repeating form of narrative (narrating n times what happens once). It extends onto the syntagmatic plane the full paradigm not only of meodrama but also of narrative frequency.

The first dramatic sequence that follows seems to narrow the narrative choices. It moves indoors to observe a single character in a long take with a distanced, static camera. We recognize signifiers of fiction: the actress Aurore Clément who starred in a previous Akerman film, *Les Rendezvous d'Anna.* We also recognize conventions of melodrama: the red low-cut dress that suggests she's not a virgin. After restlessly pacing, phoning a man and then hanging up, she says dramatically, "I love him." Suddenly she leaves the room and goes out into the night to hail a cab, walking past men loitering in the street and past the cafe which is the diegetic source for the Middle-Eastern music on the sound track.

Toute une nuit

Toute une nuit

After she and the taxi have driven off, the camera holds on the space, raising the question: what is more important, the characters and their actions, or the spaces in which they are positioned. Such spaces are foregrounded in the film's opening montage, are associated with the role of women in the traditional male-dominated narrative, and are privileged by the Proustian form of iterative (for, as Genette observes, the "Proustian creature" is "as little sensitive to the individuality of moments as he is spontaneously sensitive to the individuality of places," p. 123). Eventually the camera leads us to the woman's destination, the man's apartment where she watches him pacing upstairs, just as she had earlier been pacing.

This sequence leads us to believe *the story has begun,* but it has its deviations from traditional narrative: not only the pause at the space left by the taxi (which suggests a reluctance to pursue the linear drive of the story), but also the reversals in gender. Here it's not the man but the woman who actively pursues erotic desire. Here it's the woman who leads the camera and the story to her destination, controlling the erotic gaze as the voyeur, and the man who is the object of her gaze.

Much later in the film we will return to this same woman, admitting a man (perhaps the same man) into her apartment. And in the final sequence, we will return to this same woman reflecting on this or a similar object of desire, even though she will be in the arms of another man. It doesn't seem to matter whether it *is* the same man, for they all seem to function as substitutable members of the same

paradigm, the object of desire, just as she (as a shifter) has been selected from this same paradigm by the man whom we now see embracing her. And we recognize a similar interchangeability for all of the characters in the film—all belonging to the paradigms of pursuer and pursued within this grammar of romance. In the final sequence she will receive a return phone call from her lover and deliver a repetitive monologue on their relationship, which will fragment him as she considers why she loves him ("Maybe it's his mouth . . . or his eyes . . . or his chin . . . or the way he talks . . ."), just as women have traditionally been fragmented in Hollywood classical cinema. This monologue also offers other reasons for her desire that depend on the contexts of the setting ("I'm so tired . . . it's so hot . . . I should have gone on holiday . . . the music is so lovely") and on the strangeness of the narrative ("I can't understand it"). Ironically, these recurrences of this woman's pursuit of desire provide the film with a false promise of narrative continuity and perfect narrative closure for a film without a story, or more precisely, a film with too many stories that are unconventionally short, or a film with all of the linguistic signs of melodrama but combined in an unconventional syntax.

The three brief sequences that follow make us realize that our initial expectations about the first dramatic sequence are wrong. They provide no linear development of that story; the same woman does not reappear. Eventually we realize that all four sequences are examples from the same paradigm: of a man and woman getting (or not getting) together, four variations on the problematic couple in the same situation all strung together on the syntagmatic plane. And this situation is merely one paradigm in the grammar of romance. Moreover, all four sequences function as pseudo-iterative. Like Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu,* the narrative which Genette selects as the single focus of his theoretical analysis, *Toute une nuit* liberates the iterative from its purely descriptive function. In showing not what happened a single time, but what used to happen and still happens, typically, regularly, ritually, or every night, it explores and expands the iterative aspect—"in textual scope, in thematic importance, in degree of technical elaboration" (p. 117). Akerman demonstrates how such elaboration can take on a subversive function in cinema where, because of the realistic (or indexical) potential of the photographic image, the iterative aspect calls attention to the process of naturalizing the ideology carried by singulative instances of fiction—as if they were the inevitable Truth, as if we spectators can never escape these paradigms of gender and romance.

Here is what we actually see in these three sequences. In the first, a woman in a red jacket is seated in a cafe, waiting in the foreground, with men shooting pool in the background. A man enters, pauses at the door, and then he and the woman passionately embrace. This scene brings to our attention certain binary oppositions: coming together or not coming together (as in the previous sequence), foreground versus background, stillness versus movement. These binary oppositions apply not only thematically to the issue of romantic relationships but also reflexively to the issue of what constitutes narrative.

In the second sequence, a man and a woman are seated apart at separate tables in a cafe. Each stares at a glass, each turns to the other as the other turns away. The man gets up to leave, then the woman gets up to leave. The man returns and they suddenly embrace. Their actions are separate but parallel, like the sequences in this narrative, but then they unpredictably cohere, like the film's false narrative closure in the final sequence. The dynamics of space and the gestural movements of the characters become pointedly expressive. There is no verbal language to distract us. We recognize the meaning of these gestural movements by comparing and contrasting them with the similar movements we saw in the previous two sequences. The repetitions with variations help to code them and make us read them as language. It's a language we know from our past: from silent cinema, and from our infantile days before speech. It's a gestural language that semioticians like Pasolini and Eco have tried to theorize and that was foregrounded in the sequences we analyzed from *Umberto D* and *Il Posto.* After seeing this sequence in *Toute une nuit,* we will be more conscious of gestural and spatial language in all of the scenes that follow.

In the third sequence, three persons (two young men and a woman) are seated together in the same cafe, smoking. Suddenly one man gets up and leaves, then the second young man follows, then the

woman. All three stand outside the cafe in the street. The blond man asks the woman: "Who are you going with?" After pausing a moment and getting no verbal response, both men walk off screen in opposite directions (left and right), and the woman moves directly toward the camera out of the frame. It's the first scene that explicitly foregrounds the romantic triangle and the dynamics of selection that control narrative as well as romance —the choice of which character to follow. It also evokes the first dramatic sequence with Aurore Clément in at least three formal ways: by returning to the use of verbal language (with only the second line of dialogue in the film), by repeating the option of *not getting together,* and by relying on the combination of interior and exterior scenes. In struggling to perceive coherence, we find ourselves making connections between sequences on formal rather than on narrative grounds.

At this point, the film makes another unexpected move. For the first time it returns to characters from an earlier sequence—to the lovers who had sat apart at the cafe. Now we watch them dancing passionately to a romantic song on the juke box. Once again, the narrative rules of the film are altered, causing us to adjust our expectations, but also granting us an immediate sensory pleasure in the schmaltzy music on the sound track and in the lyrical image of the lovers dancing in the smoky cafe. Within the luminous blue-green light, the movements of the woman's vibrant hair and the couple's swaying bodies compete with the slow graceful swirling of the smoke deep in the background. Sound and image also compete for our attention. The emotional excessiveness of the music underlines the recurrence of getting together—not only the romantic reunion of the dancing couple, but also the narrative reunion of subject and spectator.

After this first reappearance of characters, the film can move on to other paradigms—of waiting and meeting, of coming and going, of sleeping and waking. The reappearance of the characters at this point no longer threatens to undermine the radical ruptures of the narrative, but to extend their scope. From here on, there will be many such reappearances, including those of Aurore Clément that offer false narrative continuity and closure. We are led to realize that such reappearances are merely another form of structural repetition—like the reappearance of actions, settings, objects and sounds. The characters are no longer singular, they no longer hold a privileged place in the narrative; no longer can they draw our attention away from all of the subtle perceptual shifts that comprise the text. The film is free to create a rich intertextuality among its own mini-stories which comprise their own paradigm—one that partially overlaps with melodrama, that most pervasive and malleable of all movie genres.

By repeatedly seeing the same banal actions freed from the context of a single continuous story, we are led to observe (almost from an ethnographic perspective) how the subtle differences in their performance communicate meaning. They become defamiliarized; they become an infinite play of difference within a closed system. For example, one woman leans against a wall as she anxiously waits for her lover, then paces restlessly before she impatiently walks off alone into the night. Later, in a different sequence, another woman, somewhat older, also appears to be waiting as she leans against a wall and smokes a cigarette. Yet she displays no restlessness or impatience, but rather a savoring of the slow pace. Then we hear someone calling "mama" from inside the building. At first the woman doesn't respond. Finally she turns, puts out her cigarette and goes inside. We realize she hasn't been waiting at all, but temporarily suspending her role as mother, taking a break. (I am told this woman is Chantal Akerman's actual mother.) The single word confirms how we read the subtle differences in the images. It also makes us see how we privilege verbal language, which is controlled by patriarchy, and how we distrust gestural language, so crucial to mother-child intersubjectivity during the pre-oedipal phase.

In another sequence a young girl enters a cafe and approaches a middle-aged man, saying, "Let's dance." He begins to clown, parodying his version of how young people dance these days. But her moves prevail: she wants to slow dance in a close embrace. Despite her age and gender, she leads every aspect of the encounter and also decides when the dance and the sequence are over, as she abandons her partner and the frame. From this point on, we watch the age of the characters more closely and the power dynamics of their movements.

In another sequence a young man goes upstairs with loud footsteps that express a bold defiance and determination mixed with anger. Then he knocks on the door, at first playfully, tapping out a well known rhythm; then his tone shifts and his knocks become loud, insistent, and aggressive. Suddenly he stops, sits on the stairs and waits, and listens to the footsteps of someone else we never see. The sounds of the footsteps and knockings at the door, which recur throughout the entire film, communicate with such specificity in this sequence that their meanings cannot be missed. They lead us to listen to all other sounds in the film with far greater attention.

By denying us a single unifying story, by frequently pitting word against visual image and nonverbal sound, by discouraging us from identifying with any of the anonymous characters, by denying us a single unified subject position, by calling our attention to the blatant stylization of structure, by reversing the axes of selection and combination, by elaborating the iterative aspect and by foregrounding the slippage between the iterative and the singulative, *Toute une nuit* makes us change the way we read a film.

Though perhaps less radical in their demands on the spectator, the two neorealist films discussed in this essay also require a similar shift in reading, one that de-emphasizes the narrative line and that leads one to interpret gestural language and rich perceptual detail. It's as if the foregrounding of the slippage between the iterative and the singulative helps one to see both the distinctiveness of the present image and its deep immersion in a system of representation. And it's the duality of this perception that helps empower one as an active spectator who is capable of resisting the singular closed reading and of perceiving the iterative traces of collective history and dominant ideology.

Notes

1. Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method,* trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980, pp. 113-117.
2. Brian Henderson, "Tense, Mood and Voice in Film (Notes After Genette)," *Film Quarterly,* XXXVI, No. 4 (Summer 1983), 11-12.
3. Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath. New York: Noonday Press, 1977, p. 40.
4. Edward Branigan develops this kind of argument in *Point of View in the Cinema,* where (explicitly echoing Genette) he observes that whereas "in a verbal narrative the temporal determinations of the narrating act are more salient than the spatial determinations. By contrast, this dissymmetry is exactly reversed in pictorial narration . . . The spatial properties of a picture are at least initially more important than other properties and hence may serve as a reference with which to measure the general activity of narration." Edward R. Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: a Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film.* New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984, p. 45.
5. According to Laura Mulvey, "Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occuring in a linear time with a beginning and an end." ("Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* (Autumn, 1975). Teresa deLauretis reverses the formulation, suggesting that all traditional male-dominated narrative demands sadism, figuring women only as obstacles that delay the male quest or as markers of the positions and settings through which the hero and his story move to reach their destination and to accomplish meaning. (*Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, pp. 103-119).
6. André Bazin, "*Umberto D:* A Great Work," in *What Is Cinema?,* Vol. II, trans. and ed. by Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971, p. 81.
7. Roland Barthes. *Writing Degree Zero* and *Elements of Semiology,* trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, p. 86. For an application of this principle to the narrative experimentation of Luis Buñuel, see also Susan Suleiman, "Freedom and Necessity: Narrative Structure in *The Phantom of Liberty,*" *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* (Summer 1978), 277-295.

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Karen B. Mann

Narrative Entanglements: *The Terminator*

Theories of narrative have primarily concerned themselves with issues such as the distinctions and the relationships between story and discourse, or the distinctions between different media, such as literature and film, as manifestations of narrative.[1] The most apparently stable element in these discussions is the definition, and even the ontological status, of the story. The statements of three theorists are quite similar; story is

> the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting);
>
> the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse, and their relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc.
>
> the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in these events.[2]

Having fixed this bedrock term, which includes both a structure (linear) and a vector (from past to future), narratologists turn to more problematic issues such as the authority for the discourse which encompasses the story. They are joined in that discussion by critics of other persuasions who also wish to fix the location of authority and its necessary concomitant, subjectivity, in texts.[3]

This issue is significant for a variety of theoretic discourses because it puts into play questions of power in both the sociopolitical and the psychic arenas. Whether or not one privileges social issues, as Marxist critics do, or personal ones, as psychoanalytic critics do, or both, as feminist critics do, the tendency is to ask the same question: who or what is "controlling" the story? The answer to this question then becomes a measure of who or what is controlling the body and mind of the human person being implied or constructed by the story. Thus, the choice of the various agents of control for discourse, and their degree of social, sexual or psychic "characterhood," will determine the acceptibility of the text itself as a representation of reality through language. And while the preoccupations of Freudian and of Marxist critics could reveal fruitful insights into the film at hand, the particular complexities of *The Terminator* are most suggestive within a feminist context. It is eventually in this context that I will examine the various agents of control (from real authors through constructed narrators to "main" characters) later in this essay. For now it is only important to recognize that the virtually universal stability of *story* itself underlies these various critical efforts to trace the nature of authority and subjectivity.

There is, nevertheless, a small class of texts that fracture the stable structure and time vector of

The Terminator

"story." Their reorganization is not the same as the reordering of chronology by discourse, whose aim is to replace suspense with comprehension. One example of this more usual disruption in Pinter's film *Betrayal*, which moves backward in time from the end of a love affair to its inception. Although it might be asserted that comprehension is the intention of all "distortions" of story by discourse,[4] Pinter's case raises at least the specter of another goal or intention which can work in other texts to distort temporal order more radically. From its outset *Betrayal* expresses a poignancy in the knowledge that the adulterous love affair (only one of several betrayals in the film) has already ended in disruption and regret: the discourse thus asserts by its reverse order that in the light of this denouement, we can "place" and even judge the events that lead to it. But counteracting that perspective is a vector of desire in the film that moves not toward the comprehension with which the narrative begins, but toward the possession of desire with which it ends. In other words, the reversal of story time by discourse time recuperates the energy of a moment in the text that does not appear to be time-driven: the desires of the characters are fixed on the present, which includes the presence (if not possession) of the beloved, at the conclusion of the film; and the viewer is left with whatever pleasures she can glean from the enacting of desire before her. The final freeze frame offers entwined hands; it can of course be argued that the highly visible wedding rings remind us of—as they represent—the marriages and friendships violated by the desire, and return the viewer to "comprehending" rather than experiencing this moment.

Gerard Genette has interesting comments to make about narrations that follow each other as they do in *Betrayal*; in explaining the disruption of forward-moving story time by a narrated flashback, he points as well to comprehension as a reason for this disordering:

> The first type of relationship is direct causality between the events of the [narrated analepsis or flashback] and those of the diegesis [story], conferring on the second narrative an *explanatory* function. It is the Balzacian "this is why." . . . the relationship (of linking) is direct; it is not via the [analeptic/flashback] narrative, which could very well be dispensed with: whether Ulysses tells about it or not, the storm is what cast him up on the shore of Phaeacia, and *the only transformation his [analeptic/flashback] narrative introduces is of a purely cognitive order.*[5]

In other words, "knowing" the result of the affair in Pinter's *Betrayal* makes the narration of its temporally earlier causes gratuitous, in that they have only cognitive, not diegetic significance: they do not otherwise advance the story or, in Genette's terms, the diegesis. This limitation of the function of the flashback is only possible, of course, if we posit a pastness, a "having happened" to the resulting event of which the events of the flashback are a cause. But there are two structural possibilities, so far little explored by film-makers, that alter not the discourse but the line of the story and the significance of its ordering simultaneously: first, when the events in the future become *causes* for events in the past (so that the telling of the past is not gratuitous explanation but a stage in the diegetic development); and second, when the motive for reaching into the past is based not on comprehension but on presence and possession of the object of one's desire.[6]

Betrayal

A thoroughgoing example of the disruption of conventional story time by desire is the film *The*

Terminator, cowritten by James Cameron and Gale Ann Hurd, directed by the former, and produced by the latter. In assessing this disruption, we must deal with two issues: what is the new logic of its story time, and how pervasive is the effect of that logic on related issues of desire and subjectivity, and hence of narrativity.

At its opening, the film presents its story and discourse simultaneously in an image of tangled metal, blue dust, and eerie light. This vision of Los Angeles in 2029 A.D. becomes significant after the fact, because so little of the visual space of the film in fact belongs to the future. For a science fiction film, *The Terminator* limits itself most thoroughly to present space. I pause over this because it bears a productive relationship to questions of narrative and narrative order. Literature has often been at a disadvantage in presenting space: since all information must be presented sequentially, narrative intention with regard to the linear ordering of spatial description is somewhat limited in its range of significance; however, many other options are available to literature for the manipulation of the orders of time.[7] Conversely, film *can* present descriptions of space virtually simultaneously, although there is greater difficulty in inflecting time the way the grammar and semantics of a sentence in literature can. In *The Terminator*, future space is in fact rarely presented, but carefully inflected for the viewer. Those moments when it is presented operate to superimpose the colors, lights, and structures of that future onto the American urban present, so that the remaining spaces of the film can stand in for "LA, 2029." Indeed, the actions of the terminator create those "future" tangles of metal in eerie blue light in place after "present" place (the bar, the automobile, the bedroom, the police station, the factory).

Hence, at both the spatial and the temporal level, the film overlays two worlds. There is great economy in this; as the criminal psychologist in the film asserts after Kyle Reese's narrative of his time travel by means of a machine (since destroyed) that will permit no mechanical weapons of the future to pass—it's "a paranoid fantasy . . . clever . . . it doesn't require a shred of proof . . . brilliant." The film does not require elaborate sets to create a possible future for the viewer; it only requires the viewer's belief in the mental condition of Kyle Reese.

This doubling, or tangling, of our sense of place (our placing of ourselves) extends beyond this matter of space/image at the level of story, to questions of other narrative levels as well. Not only does the opening shot not represent the actual space of the story, but it is asserted to be inadequate in the overt trace of a narrator who attempts to make sense of the time/space distortions of the film. The words "Los Angeles 2029 A.D." that appear on the screen announce the presence of that narrator. Extradiegetic music begins with the appearance of a human figure in this landscape. This narrator then offers more extended discourse to state the tangle of time that the story will present:

> The machines rose from the ashes of the nuclear fire. Their war to exterminate mankind had raged for decades, but the final battle would not be fought in the future. It would be fought here, in our present. Tonight . . .

This narration relies on shifts of verb tense to foreground the temporal impossibilities of the film. At one obvious level, of course, the present does determine the future, so that the battle for the future is indeed fought here, now. And *The Terminator* can operate successfully as an extended critique of present-day mechanization, nuclear armaments, and the decay of social relationships. From the Tech Noir bar, to the ubiquitous electric equipment (hair dryers, electric curlers, Walkmans, TVs, radios), to the essential telephone answering machines, technology dominates meaning relationships and transactions in the film.[8] At a not much deeper level, the film presents the implications of technologized sexual relations. No better symbol for this exists than the killing of Ginger after she makes love (while wearing a Walkman) to a young man (who whispers obscenities over the telephone) who also bears an eerie if diminished resemblance in physique to the terminator himself.

But to return to the film's opening and its entailments, the ensuing title credits provide an apparent interruption of the story world, if not the discourse about that world. Indeed, placed as they are, these credits are part of that discourse and are in harmony with the implications of the immediately preceding images and words: most obviously, the names for cast and production people are computer-generated. Yet behind these names move shapes whose meaning the viewer cannot at first de-

termine. The reason for the obscurity is the fact that the *scale*[9] is wrong: the screen is able to frame only a part of what exists. What is clear is the nature of the movement of these "meaningless" forms: *both* left to right and right to left. Only after that double movement is ended does the frame readjust suddenly to permit a "complete" and fixed view of what these shapes mean—they create apparently 3-dimensional letters (i.e., letters existing in and then moving into the depth of the screen) spelling out the film's title, *The Terminator*. Although it is not necessary, it is possible to accept this portion of the film's narration as a metaphor for its space, direction, coherence, and meaning. The dilemma that the narrative will try to call up and contain is created by the antithetical movements of time and of desire, so that the impossibility of the solution for the dilemma of desire is expressed by the impossibility of the time scheme.

To summarize this movement, one needs simply to move to the end of the film, when Linda Hamilton as Sarah explains that her son, John Conner, has sent backward in time a young man named Kyle Reese, who will not only rescue Sarah from the terminator, but will become his own (John Conner's) father. As Sarah says, "a person could go crazy trying to figure this out." And so most original reviewers of the film have ignored this unnecessarily bizarre twist on time travel, undoubtedly accepting it as a plausible enough excuse for sexual scenes in the film and a justification for sending as violent a creature as Arnold Schwarzenegger after a woman. But that story line calls up such important psychological and social themes that it draws us into testing the film to see how much such a story and the attendant discourse can explain. The story? An older man chooses a younger man and sends him to a woman to protect her from destruction. The younger man and woman make love and she becomes pregnant. She gives birth to a son who becomes that older man who chooses a younger man who . . .

I would like to start at the point where this story departs from the possible and enters the imaginary, in order to ask what needs are served by such an entrance. But in order to distinguish among several possible needs that might operate, I must first make a choice among various levels at which to read the narrative, by settling the question of its focus for authority in the narration—its choice of a point from which to view the story—its determination of where the "subject" of the story may be found.

Most critics are careful to delimit the meaning of the "subject" or subjectivity because of the diverse assumptions that may underlie one's sense of being a subject.[10] One severely limited explanation of what subjectivity can mean in film can serve as a minimal beginning here. In this passage Edward Branigan hopes to define the term only according to its function in the narration, not as a reified essence:

> Narration, then, is not a person or a state of mind, but a linguistic and logical relationship posed by the text as a condition of its intelligibility. It is a way of measuring the presentation and perception of objects. The relation of subject to object may change in the course of a text; that is, the gap may change between the subject of the telling [e.g., the narrator] . . . and the subject of what is told [e.g., the character]. In this way, the text is fragmented, divided into a series of subject-tellings. At the minimum, however, there will be at least one narration [i.e., one subject telling a story] in a text, one role for a subject . . . Typically there will be many narrations. . . .[11]

By grafting Branigan's definition onto a well-accepted scheme for distinguishing levels in narration (levels of "subject-tellings"),[12] we may then go on to see the significance of temporal order for one's sense of who serves as the focus of subjectivity in *The Terminator*. These levels may be graphed hierarchically.

real author — real reader
[implied author — implied reader]
[narrator — narratee]
[character]

Branigan asserts that the subject position is a linguistic and logical relationship which is a condition of the text's intelligibility. In other words, if we extend the implications of Branigan's definition, we might consider assigning subjectivity to the real author, thus making the text intelligible as a political, social, economic artifact, as an example of cultural productions that expose and/or enrich a particular

historical person.[13] If instead we assign subjectivity to the implied author, we can consider questions of ideology: we are concerned with the power of the implied author to imagine, and therefore we can consider the possibility for the implied reader to resist that author and so to imagine differently, for the text is being offered as a screen on which is projected an image.[14] If we assign subjectivity to the narrator, we must consider questions of epistemology, for it is the narrator who "knows" things which he/she can only believe to be true[15]; therefore, the text becomes a center for self-examination, because the text is being offered as a mirror in which the narratee can see self and world.

Finally, if we embed ourselves most thoroughly in the narrative, by assigning subjectivity to characters, we seem to come closest to an immersion in feeling and perceiving—to defining subjectivity as the impingement of experience on the body. After all, there is no dyad for character in the otherwise bifurcated blueprint for describing narrative levels. It is, however, true that one can bifurcate the narrative by doubling characters. It is there that I would like to begin. In simple terms, the film *The Terminator* will "read" differently (and its tangled time scheme will grow or recede in significance) based upon where the viewer locates the real subject (and hence the authority for the adequacy of "telling, watching, listening"[16]) in the film.

According to the *discourse*, the central character of the film is the terminator—after all, he is the eponymous hero. His intention is to destroy the woman Sarah Conner before she can become a mother. The story moves from his birth into our present life to his crushing at the end. To understand his significance no tangled time scheme seems necessary. He has a male form with a steel chassis that will "tear the heart out" of a woman; he is made obviously phallic with his guns and his fist capable of penetrating the belly of the first human he meets. Other men in the film are incapable of stopping him. His ability to "rise from the ashes" of every attack on him becomes a monumental reverse synecdoche (whole for the part) for erection after erection. Sarah's final words to him rightly focus not on his machine-like but on his sexual identity: "You're terminated, fucker."

Effaced from the text, and so by analogy perhaps identified as the implied author of its story,

The Terminator

is John Conner. The viewer never sees Conner on screen, although he is to a large degree responsible for the series of events which transpire in the film. If he is a character in the story, then his significance corresponds in some ways to that of Michael J. Fox in *Back to the Future*. He satisfies the fantasy of reaching back in time to control those who control him—his parents—by choosing who they are to be. More specifically, by choosing his father especially, he both defines himself and controls access to his mother's sexuality.[17] Such a story can also satisfy a somewhat different, perhaps less specifically male need: his choice provides the illusion of self-generation, because unless John Conner chooses his father and commits him to the past, John himself cannot be born.

The site at which the projects of the men in the film converge is Sarah Conner. She is emphatically at the mercy of the "plots" of both the termina-

The Terminator

tor and John Conner. A feminist reading of her position is easy enough. She is the means by which two competing cultures hope to perpetuate themselves, for she *represents* values that will only *conquer* through the male issue. Nevertheless, she is invested with more than usual powers: she not only accepts the reality of what she has heard narrated to her, but manages to ensure her own survival during the climactic final scene of the film. It is she who "trades places" with Kyle in the car during the final chase, after which he is wounded and largely helpless. The transfer of energy and determination expressed through behavior and dialogue during the concluding battle in the factory gives her credibility as the source for the legend Kyle Reese has fallen in love with. In the last analysis, she not only terminates the terminator, but chooses the father for her child by taking Kyle to bed with her. The incompetent waitress of the film's beginning has become the competent woman moving alone into the mountains of Mexico at the conclusion.

What is apparent in this summation of Sarah's story is its similarity to conventional narratives of male coming-of-age. Here, too, no distortion of story seems necessary. Although Sarah as the object of the other narratives can hold great interest, in her own right as a subject, her temporal trajectory is straightforward. Her own difficulties with time have to do with learning from experience, accepting the changes that time will bring, and tolerating the loss of the beloved that time demands. She provides her own comment on loss of the present moment and the presence of the beloved when the Mexican boy takes the photograph that becomes so significant in the story: "In a few hours we loved a lifetime's worth."

This photograph is the link to Kyle Reese. It is a candid Polaroid given to him by John Conner before the need for time travel is apparent to Kyle. He is fascinated by it and by what may be encapsulated in its face. Pragmatically, the photo is what gives Kyle an advantage over the terminator in finding the right Sarah Conner, because he knows what such a person "looks like." Only at the conclusion of the film does the "attraction" of this face for Kyle receive a gloss: when Sarah is captured on film, she herself is really inwardly gazing at their own past love-making, and so it is at least partly this moment together (as witnessed to by the visibility of Sarah's memory in her face) that Kyle loves and follows. Indeed, the fact of the photograph is the pivot that changes the significance of the time travel from a purely patriarchal one as described above, to something somewhat different. This is especially clear when we ascribe subjectivity to Kyle.

Kyle Reese enters the film shortly after the terminator does. At first, his status in the story is diegetically unclear, because his behavior mimics that of the first male, with important mutations: he confronts police, not punks; he robs a department store, not simply persons, and he appears capable of suffering pain.[18] But in terms of the filmic discourse, Kyle is very important. He is the author of those segments which reach into the future of the story, through verbal narration and through mindscreen. Further, the visual images that trigger his movements through mental time reinforce the social themes of the film: he connects the present-day machinery of capitalistic development with the horrors of twenty-first-century life; and he connects the sources of his own feelings with a woman's face. The line of dialogue that reverberates most, though, is his announcement that "I came across time for you, Sarah. I love you. I always have."

Kyle's speech defines the one temporal impossibility in the story to be a product of sexual desire. His "love" has required the leaping of a gap which the order of things defines to be unbridgeable: that gap may be accepted on simply existential terms as itself, as that thing which is impossible, as that thing which we name a *gap*, or a *lack*, in other words as that which separates us from having what we want. It may also stand for various gaps which have more specific social or personal significance. A

brief list might include the love of man for woman, the love of son for mother[19], or the love of younger man for older woman.[20] It is tempting to choose the last as most significant for the actual story line, because then more of the narration becomes explanatory in its structure and details, and interrelated social and sexual factors come into play.

Kyle Reese is in love with a woman who is heroic and a mother. When he is presented with her picture by John Conner, the image already carries a personality and a history. But in the course of the story itself, it is the young woman, before her heroism and maternity, whom he actually possesses. Hence it is difficult to decide *what* he desires, the mother or the girl; probably the mother incarnate in the girl. A comparison of Kyle to Michael J. Fox in *Back to the Future* would be instructive here. Fox's character goes back to *fix* the past in order to *have* a future; he doesn't really want to stay there and is horrified by the incarnation of his mother in a girl. Kyle *does* intend to stay in the past: his is a desire for the presence of the woman, not control over her influence. Further, Sarah's attractiveness to him is both her youth and her abilities, which the movie reveals to occupy different time periods. Kyle wants, then, to possess both flesh and spirit in the female. His quest is thoroughly erotic, and his full insertion in the temporal order of the erotic lies in his birthing of the future by impregnation and in his dying.

The importance of Kyle as subject for the film is not exhausted by this psychological issue, however. There is also in his story an overlapping of the two aspects of narrative—doing and comprehending, or even (by analogy) story and discourse. According to the time logic of the film, he falls in love with a woman he has already made love to (she has already borne their child). The moment on screen (*in* the narrative that is the film) when he makes love to Sarah, he is doing what he already knows the significance of. But this of course subverts the usual sequence of the story and discourse, in which there is first the doing (the story) and then the comprehending (the discourse). There is great power in performing an act the full significance of which one already knows. In this way, *The Terminator* enacts one of the desires of interpretation, that the end (the cognitive, or *discourse*) define [by "fathering"] the beginning (the actual, or *story*).

It is possible that neither Kyle and Sarah, nor the implied viewer, may possess this comprehension —may realize that their encounter is the moment when the story-that-will-return-them-to-this-moment begins. But most competent viewers would imagine not more than one love-making leading to conception within that story. In this sense, there is an echo in this act of the terminator's own perpetual resurgence, in that the love-making will repeat itself again and again like places on a Möbius strip.

There are, then, a number of interconnected issues raised by the structure of the film that center on sexual relations. The obviously distinctive issue is tangled story time. In creating the illusion of a changeable chronology, when its unchanging, linear, forward vector is axiomatic, the implied author of the narrative gives the sense of altering the unalterable. In the normal course of time, one event follows another, with the distinction between the "end" of one event and the "beginning" of another being the primary gap to be defined and bridged. Each "new" event both creates the gap between "then" and "now," and then implies a comment upon "then" by "now," as the future becomes a comment upon or expression of the meaning of the past. As I have earlier described, when discourse reverses this order, by describing a present state of affairs and then narrating the past that led up to those affairs, it implies that the past can comment upon it. One effect of the tangled time scheme in *The Terminator* is a doubling of these functions, for the past comes both before and after the future, and it both comments upon and is commented upon by that future. This certainly represents the connectedness across the gap between past and future, so that this gap between one event and the next seems not to exist, and we are secure (or trapped) in a present that is doubly determined.

Such a view corresponds well with recent assertions about time by physicists. Studies in dynamic, non-linear systems, and especially efforts to relate communication theory to the laws of thermodynamics, have raised possibilities similar to those of narrative.[21] Conventional wisdom about temporal systems asserts that time is unidirectional, moving into a future often defined by loss: theoretical (primarily statistical) justifications for this belief have been widely accepted, as the new physics has abandoned the Newtonian universe of reversible forces in favor

of the entropic one of disintegrating energies. In reaching this conviction, however, scientists have asserted something startling about our knowledge as it relates to temporal order; they point out that individual elements in large systems reveal little about the movements that may have led to their present positions and conditions. When we are given a description of a present situation, we can only move forward in time to probable future situations, not backward to what of innumerable possibilities might have caused this present situation.

From the perspective of ordinary life, this may seem counterintuitive, for we usually assume that the future is unknowable, although the past may be fixed because it has "caused" the present. Our conviction about this stems, of course, from the records we have of the past. But with only a description of the present, we cannot begin to know what of many possible pasts may have generated this present—although we can, in statistical principle, know what the future will probably be. Such a view of things entails privileging the present. By a *description*[22] we can begin a causal chain into the future; but we can only move into the past insofar as a present that has been *described* (or photographed) has become a past. A present that has not been described (in language or in image) cannot become a known past, although it may of course operate as an unknown cause nonetheless.

It is certainly Kyle Reese who gives cognitive significance to the past—especially since, for him, the future which he narrates *for* the film viewer *is* his past *in* the film. But what he also gives significance to is a human desire at odds with temporal, discursive, cognitive order: his desire for a woman who possesses the powers that time bestows before time has ravaged her is so intense that it wills the destruction of temporal order. That violation of chronology is an index of the largeness of his desire. The impossibility of that violation is an index of the unlikelihood of its satisfaction. And so the film portrays at its center a moment of sexual union or possession (our symbol for presence) in which we must believe because of its effect (conception of a child)—which is punished by sudden, instant, and even immediate death. Hence, in a fashion that Lévi-Strauss assigns to myth, the narrative gives the illusion of satisfying an intense need at the same time that it admits the impossibility of the satisfaction it offers. It both resolves and does not resolve the dilemma: Kyle will forever return and forever die.

There is a further economy set in motion by taking Kyle seriously. To invest emotionally in Reese, to grant him the doubtful coherence of a subject in the film, we as viewers define the terms of our engagement with the film. We choose what we believe will be important about its manipulation of our feelings and our thoughts, and the problematic areas of those feelings and thoughts become more clear. This seems especially true in this film because Kyle's dilemma affects women viewers with a kind of double bind. On the one hand, Kyle's image of woman is a fairly liberated one ("good fighters"); further, he gives priority to woman's capacity as mother (an issue some feminists may not recognize as liberating). Yet he seduces woman into a socially benevolent role by giving priority to her son's success over her own. Thus, women viewers may also be seduced by praise and recognition into behaviors that have been justified on other grounds by earlier cultural narratives.

This fact may be masked by the ostensible conclusion of the film, when all of the men are dead or unborn, and the soon-to-be mother drives purposefully (complete with terminator sunglasses) into the coming storm. In fact, if we attempt to focus the film as a narrative whole by moving upward and outward from Kyle Reese to the larger frames that embed his narrative, we salvage this sort of social and sexual optimism at the expense of the film's temporal impossibility.[23]

I prefer to leave the narrative as a tangle by concluding with the issues raised by its "impossibility" (or—in Branigan's terms—its illogicality and unintelligence) even if it means giving priority to Kyle Reese over Sarah Conner as subject of the film. I do this, not because the male role in sexual relations takes precedence over the female, but because the narrative then makes more obvious the difficult (if not impossible) position of women *vis à vis* social/reproductive continuity. Teresa de Lauretis has already argued extensively that the story of a woman's fulfillment (as subject) of her destiny as a mother is really only a disguised enactment of the fulfillment of her role as object of man's desire.[24] In fact, in her discussion of the Freudian context for this phenomenon, she quotes a passage

that describes the crossing of sexual and generational lines in terms strikingly similar to the outline of the narrative from the position of John Conner:

> It is in this identification [of woman with the mother] too that she acquires her attractiveness to a man, whose Oedipus attachment to his mother it kindles into passion. How often it happens, however, that it is only his son who obtains what he himself aspired to! One gets the impression that a man's love and a woman's are a phase apart psychologically.[25]

There are, in fact, two teleologies operant for women and for men: the satisfaction of desire and the reproduction of the species. For de Lauretis, Oedipal desire demands that woman *consent* to fulfill the feminine position as object of male heterosexual desire, even though it is possible to *force* woman to become pregnant and hence a mother. And because her argument is aimed against the male Oedipal position, she asserts that "women *must either* consent *or* be seduced into consenting to femininity."[26] By tangling the time scheme of *The Terminator*, Cameron and Hurd have shifted the balance of power in this conflict. First, the film makes clear the high cost of such an agenda for man as father: Kyle becomes expendable at the moment when his son has been conceived. Next, although the narrative does play up the placing of Sarah in a position to fulfill her sexual role in a cultural plot, by privileging her contributions as a subject who *makes* the men who they are in the film, the narrative contains or limits the significance of that moment when Kyle succeeds in making love to her. Hence the film can permit the viewer to accede (and respond) to certain facts of our dominant sexual/cultural narratives while conceiving of ways in which those narratives might be distorted and redefined. Insofar as culture overlays biology, it works to achieve (if not desire) consent from woman.

The Terminator offers several ways to get woman to say "yes": by threat of force (the terminator); by the ideal of motherhood itself (John Conner); and by emotional response (Kyle Reese). That culture cannot continue without the mother is clear. That Sarah Conner consents is equally clear. But that the story expresses doubts about real sexual congruence in all of its dimensions, is most clear of all. If there is a way to say yes without succumbing to history as an expression of time and culture, the authors of *The Terminator* haven't found it yet.

If, as a postscript, I move outward from this single film to other films that may shed light on it, some further speculations might be possible. Indeed, the kinds of films one might set beside *The Terminator* are several. There are, of course, all of the time travel films I referred to earlier, whose primary consideration is the contrast in comprehension between past and future. Such films do have a premise that may be useful: by integrating events from differing time schemes, they attempt both to validate and to frame point of view as the product of a particular historical moment or context. At a more profound level, they also imply that one can move between moments in time without losing the point of view or the knowledge that we in fact (in this age) believe to be moment-specific. Hence, although (for example) *Back to the Future* entertains us with the reality of Michael J. Fox's feelings, we know that he could not "know" what he knows when he finds himself in the 1950s. Our delight comes from the intellectual contrasts his presence provokes, not from an emotional investment in his immersion in that world.

Back to the Future

Another recent film that plays more dramatically with this movement between two worlds is *Julia and Julia*. This is not because Kathleen Turner in that film loses her awareness of the present when she crosses time into an alternate future that she at

first believes to be the fulfillment of her desires. Rather, she finds that such a future has a logic of its own that is resistant to her feelings and can even create her identity anew, despite her best efforts to be the person she always wanted to be.

There are other early, not widely seen films that bear a more significant structural relationship to *The Terminator*: Orson Welles's *Mr. Arkadin* and Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. Both concern the destruction of the past and connect it with sexual issues. In the former, the shadowy main character is at pains to prevent the resurrection of his past, which serves as a threat to his relationship to his daughter, who is also seeking some sexual independence. In the end, Arkadin is incapable of destroying his own past. In Marker's *La Jetée*, the main character is destroyed by that past. Indeed, the common ground between this film and *The Terminator* is so great that explication of that film would virtually duplicate the argument above: a man tries through imagination literally to move backward in time to a moment before World War III, when as a child he was fascinated by the enigmatic beauty of a woman's face. His temporal retreat is motivated both by personal desire and by social duty to a culture seeking to prevent its own destruction. Like Kyle Reese, however, the man finds that the return is impossible: he may love, and she may desire, but the social order demands that his desire move toward the future, not toward the woman—and the enigma that drew him to her was the presence in her face of the fact of his own extinction. Hence, this film is even more bleak thatn *The Terminator* in its reliance on the Freudian elements of desire, forbidden knowledge, and the disjunction between the personal and the social.

Other recent films confront the more specific relationship of younger man and older woman as a representation of the tangling of knowledge and desire that conventional sex-linked roles seem to have generated. It is difficult to speculate about why this topic should now have become so much more likely. It seems logical to turn to the feminist movement itself as the force that freed women to be both intelligent (or mature) and sexual, not simply for themselves, but for men as well. We seem to have moved past the Restoration comedy stereotype of the older woman as butt, embarrassing in her appetites and ignorant of the world's realities. Even recent lists of the 10 sexiest women are dominated by women over 40. Films about women such as these, however, focus their attention on the surface difficulties of passion that fights against the passage of time. This is not, of course, the only dilemma for woman—or at least for Sarah Conner. Painful though it may be to carve out a sexual relationship that fights dominant cultural norms, the true sacrifice is not demanded by man but by child: here most clearly woman's personal desires must give way to the demands of another who represents society in the form of the next generation. This topic has received treatment as well in films like *The Good Mother* and *A Cry in the Dark*. From that point of view, perhaps the invisible John Conner controls the narrative after all.

Chris Marker's *La Jetée*

Notes

1. Of the many recent texts on narratology, the most salient include Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Janet Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Susan Sniader Lanzer, *The Narrative Act* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Nick Browne, *The Rhetoric of Film Narration* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982); Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983); and David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).
2. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 19; Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 25; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 3.
3. There are, of course, numerous excellent studies. See, for instance, Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, 3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18; Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Ben Brewster et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Edward Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema* (New York: Mouton, 1984).
4. This claim is made by Seymour Chatman in Chapter 11 of his forthcoming text, *Coming to Terms*.
5. *Narrative Discourse*, p. 233.
6. Although desire has become a catchall word for a set of related psychic phenomena, it seems most potent as an expression of sexual energies that may be called up and channeled by other aspects of the self. The more inclusive conception of desire as that movement toward an object which one perceives will make up for a lack is nevertheless consonant with what I wish to say here. The film *Somewhere in Time* embodies desire in this sexual sense quite thoroughly, and is analogous to *The Terminator* insofar as the latter is a story of intense and quickly frustrated desire.
7. This assertion is made by Chatman in *Story and Discourse*, pp. 222–23.
8. One early review noted the appropriateness of the black garbage collector and his mechanized truck at the opening of the present-day narrative, as visual evidence of our current social conditions.
9. Scale is significant because it is a phenomenon dependent upon the existence of hierarchical relations, and so can become a measure of them; it can help to make evident the fact of differential relations themselves. Thus scale can mark the relations between Kyle Reese and the terminator, or between desire and its satisfaction.
10. See Mulvey, Metz, Heath, and de Lauretis in note 3, above.
11. Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema*, p. 3.
12. See Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 151.
13. Numerous critics have written from a Marxist or New Historical point of view. Early studies include the works of Louis Althusser as well as articles, especially those by Stephen Heath and Christian Metz, in *Screen*. Texts such as James Monaco's *American Film Now* (New York: New York Zoetrope, 1979; rev. 1984) and Thomas Schatz's *Hollywood Genres* (New York: Random House, 1981) speak of both directors and kinds of films sociohistorically.
14. Kaja Silverman has offered a redefinition of the movie screen partially in these terms in her work on Lacan's Seminar 11 of *Four Fundamental Concepts*; see "Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look and Image," *Camera Obscura* 19 (January 1989): 54–84.
15. Chatman distinguishes carefully between functions of the author who imagines and the narrator who knows in *Coming to Terms*.
16. Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema*, p. 2.
17. This issue has been extensively explored in the mirrored relationship of fathers and daughters in the plays of Shakespeare. See Linda E. Boose, "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare," *PMLA* 97 (May 1982); pp. 325–47.
18. Stephen Jenkins, in his book on Fritz Lang, discusses such ambivalent male figures. See "Lang: Fear and Desire," *Fritz Lang: the Image the Look*, ed. Stephen Jenkins (London: British Film Institute, 1981), pp. 38–124.
19. De Lauretis deals at length with this Oedipal desire in the chapter "Desire in Narrative" in *Alice Doesn't*, pp. 103–57.
20. This is a topic that is rarely treated in films. Two obvious examples are Louis Malle's *Murmur of the Heart* and Agnes Varda's *Kung Fu Master*.
21. Several lay versions of the new physics exist. Two valuable ones include James Gleick, *Chaos: the Making of a New Science* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987); and Jeremy Campbell, *Grammatical Man: Information, Entropy, Language and Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).
22. Very thoughtful discussion of the implications of description and descriptive order can be found in Phillipe Hamon's "Rhetorical Status of the Descriptive," *Yale French Studies* 61 (1981), pp. 1–26.
23. The films of Cameron and Hurd seem to stretch belief by presenting science fiction and future worlds, but in both *The Terminator* and *The Abyss*, they resort to only one completely human impossibility: in the former, it is time travel; in the latter it is the capacity to breathe liquid. We might ponder what they can express about humankind through these impossibilities.
24. De Lauretis begins this aspect of her argument on p. 132 of *Alice Doesn't*.
25. Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. 22, p. 134. As quoted by de Lauretis in *Alice Doesn't*, p. 133.
26. pp. 133–34.

The Mirror

Vlada Petric

Tarkovsky's Dream Imagery

It is widely acknowledged that Tarkovsky's films are suffused with what he refers to as an *oneiric air*—a dreamlike impact—which resists the audience's need to verify the logic, as well as the credibility, of the events presented on the screen. Especially in *The Mirror* (1975–78) and *Stalker* (1980), Tarkovsky succeeds in conveying daydreams about the past and the future through pure cinematic means: complementing verbal expression by audiovisual means, he achieves a kinesthetic orchestration that is experienced on a sensory-motor level, mostly because of insistent, continuous camera movement through space. Instead of controlling the viewer's attention by cutting from one image to the other, Tarkovsky emphasizes the temporal nature of reality, by means of which he transcends the commonplace signification of objects in order to reach something that the naked eye neglects or is unaccustomed to perceiving.

With all its socio-biographical implications, *The Mirror* is a dream film *par excellence*, reflecting the author's reminiscences of his own youth, while *Stalker*—commonly read as a science-fiction fantasy—is a hallucinatory anticipation of a world that "represents the reality of the artist's inner life."[1] In these films, it is the execution of the shots, particularly their kinesthetic intensity, that makes the objects or events presented on the screen look both imaginary and real. Tarkovsky's treatment of tracking and its interaction with the movement within the shot, together with the chromatic rendition of the image, are directly opposed to the Eisenteinian collision produced by the juxtaposition of stationary shots. In his book *Sculpting in Time*, Tarkovsky explicitly states that "the film image comes into being during shooting and exists *within* the frame, while editing brings together shots which are *already* filled with time."[2] For Tarkovsky, the notion of time is the most important aspect of the film medium, because "it is inherent to cinema. . . . It pulsates through the blood vessels of the film, making it alive through various rhythmic pressures,"[3] which confirms the director's attempt to evoke emotional, often highly visceral responses in the viewer, instead of triggering ideas meant to support a particular attitude toward society and history. This is clearly exemplified by his use of documentary archival footage (e.g., the Red Army crossing Lake Sivash in *The Mirror*) which, with its "rhythmic pressure," generates a nightmarish feeling: overexposed and accelerated, the authentic footage is perceived as "a superhuman effort of a tragic moment in history, thus becoming the center, the very essence, the heart and nerve of my film."[4] Consequently, the historic significance of the found document is transformed into a subjective vision of actual facts that occurred in the past, experienced both as a distressing and nostalgic vision of history.

An important feature of Tarkovsky's dream imagery is that his shots are never distorted from

their representational appearance, yet at the same time the projected image looks "estranged" (a common term used by Soviet Constructivists of the 1920s), rendered obliquely in order to suppress the "dramatic" meaning of the event, while getting the viewer involved with meanings hidden beneath the narrative level. Encouraged to search for something beyond the image as an *analog* of reality, allowed to ponder upon the presented events/objects, the viewers engage in their own reflection upon what they perceive on the screen. A close analysis of climactic sequences in the two Tarkovsky films shows that they contain many features characteristic of dream process, such as the bizarreness of the situation, strong physical motion, obfuscated peripheral vision (elimination of the image's borders), the flickering effect (light pulsation), an unexpected change of chromatic tonality, spatial-temporal discontinuity, pictorial distortion of objects, decelerated motion, a fluctuating focus (blurring)—all of which contribute to the acceptance of unusual occurrences taking place on the screen. If, for example, the plaster on the ceiling begins to disintegrate, falling—in slow motion—on the protagonist (in *The Mirror*), or a liquid substance starts pouring over vertically positioned screens in the background (in *Stalker*), the viewer is compelled to look for the hidden meaning of such oddities. As emphasized earlier, Tarkovsky finds a balance between the ontological authenticity of the film's image and its phenomenological obliqueness, which helps his dream imagery transcend the film "language" as a system of signs, reaching the level of audiovisual abstraction. Thus, the unique cinematic (kinesthetic) experience suppresses a psychoanalytical interpretation of the filmed event: while doubtless intriguing, such interpretation not only lacks analytical substantiation but is less revealing than the actual experiencing of the oneiric mood generated by particular cinematic devices and their relation to the thematic aspect of the sequence.

There are two kinds of kinesthetic movement in *The Mirror* and *Stalker*: the camera's lateral trajectory with a person dominating the close foreground, while a semi-abstract (blurred) motion occurs in the far background, and the camera gliding perpendicularly over objects in nature. Most of the shots in the first part of *Stalker* (after the Prologue) are executed with lateral tracking: accompanying (in close proximity) the three characters (Stalker, Writer, and Scientist) in their journey to the center of the Zone, the camera envisions the shape of things to come through an out-of-focus landscape which is seen behind the travelers' heads positions in the foreground (often with the back of the head facing the camera), so much so that the indistinct part of the image becomes more expressive than the distinct one. As a result, the blurred background overpowers the human figure in the foreground, as if entrapping the characters, who become more and more lethargic, staring off into empty space, disappointed with what they have encountered in the place for which they have searched so long.

One should be aware of the distinction between Tarkovsky's lateral camera movement and Godard's parallel tracking as employed in *See You at Mao* (1969), where the camera dollies along the endless automobile assembly line, showing workers engaged in repetitive, mechanical movements, or in *Tout va bien* (1972) where it tracks in front of the innumerable cashiers at a supermarket, in parallel to the wild rush of striking workers demolishing the store. The function of Godard's camera movement is to intensify the physical action taking place in front of the camera, for ideological purposes, while Tarkovsky's is to penetrate the environmental facts, based on the director's belief that the camera is capable of unearthing the hidden significance of the material world. On the other hand, Tarkovsky's long takes also differ significantly from the notorious "sequence shots" executed by Miklós Jancsó in *Winter Wind* (1969) and *The Red Psalm* (1972), where the ceaseless camera movement *describes*—in rhythmic terms—ritualistic events choreographed in front of the camera with an overt political concern. Tarkovsky's camera movement *reflects*—in cinematic terms—the rhythmic pulsation concealed beneath the outside appearance of reality, provoking a strong emotional response, as well as contemplation.

In *The Mirror*, almost all tracking shots are more or less self-referential, especially when the movement within the frame is decelerated, as in the tracking shot over the grass, bushes, and leaves, ending on the table with a piece of bread, and a candle holder gently overturned by the wind (as a poetic gesture, the same shot is repeated twice at

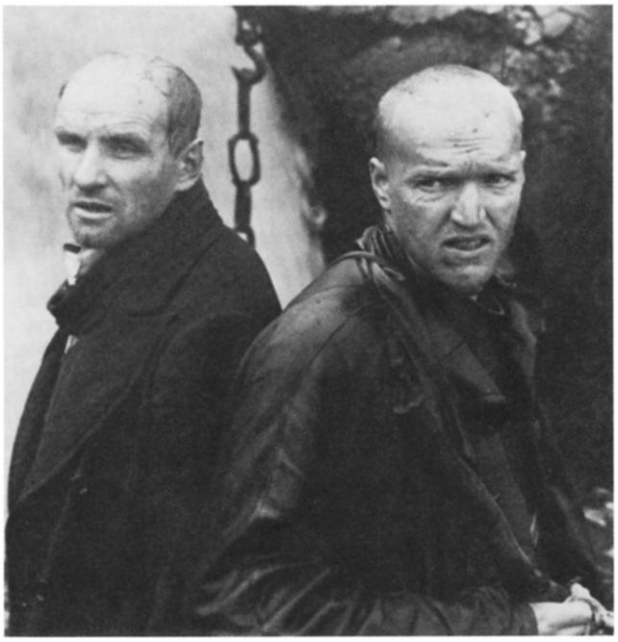
crucial points of the filmic diegesis). Even more enchanting is the frontal camera movement following the young Alexei as he enters (in slow motion) the old house and passes through floating, transparent curtains before reaching an antique mirror in which the boy is confronted by his own shadowy reflection. The kinesthetic energy of such a movement affects the spectator's point of view: because the camera assumes the boy's subjective point of view that brings the spectator *alone* to the surface of the looking glass—the audience experiences an alienating effect in relation to the reflected referent's image, and the entire event has been "made strange," hence experienced with a strong associative inclination.

At the same time, the impact of this and similar movements is at once sensorial and emotional, as the pace of the tracking is either synchronized or desynchronized with the rhythm of spoken text, the musical accompaniment, and the thematic aspect of the action. *The Mirror* opens with a long shot of a vast field, seen from the point of view of the female protagonist sitting on a wooden fence, while at the very end of the film, the camera slowly tracks through a dark forest whose trees increasingly preclude the view of the distant field seen at the beginning of the film. *Stalker* exhibits a different relationship between the opening and closing rhythm: it begins (after the credits) with a frontal camera tracking through the narrow doorway of the protagonist's bedroom (with sculpturally designed murky walls), while ending with a stationary shot of the protagonist's daughter wistfully leaning on the table. In the first case, the opening stasis anticipates the pensive mood of the entire film, while the motion of the finale reinforces the nostalgic nature of reminiscences; in the second case, the initial movement forebodes a mysterious journey, while the stationary ending (above all, the camera's focus on the closed window) is almost a literal visualization of a dead end.

Slow motion, commonly exploited in the narrative cinema to make superfluous action look visually attractive (and grossly trivialized in popular video songs), in Tarkovsky's films assumes the function defined by Vsevolod Pudovkin more than a half century ago: "Close-up of time." Whenever the motion on Tarkovsky's screen is decelerated, the action acquires a strong emotional impact, especially in nostalgic recollections, nightmares, and fantasies (e.g., the flying birds in *The Mirror*). Decelerated motion is the emotional *core* of Tarkovsky's dream imagery, which in climactic moments accomplishes what Maya Deren terms the "vertical penetration/examination" of the filmed subject, making the viewers aware of the *passage of time* and its *rhythmic pressures*. To experience all this, one should search *beyond* the shot's narrative meaning, since it is beneath the image's representational aspect where numerous layers of ineffable transcendental signification can be found. Consequently, *The Mirror* and *Stalker* transcend the Freudian signification of dream images, in that they do not so much function as latent symbols as they contribute to a subliminal experience of the dream world.

Lengthy tracking shots are not the only source of Tarkovsky's cinematic oneirism; an equivalent dreamlike mood is generated by the stationary (staring) shots depicting a dedramatized action, as in the penultimate long take in *Stalker*, when three men sit mesmerized in one of the Zone's chambers, disappointed with the realization that the place they searched for so long is not "the room where everybody's most heartfelt desire will be granted."[5] As they despondently contemplate their adventure, a series of unusual occurrences takes place around them, yet they remain "untouched" by the external world: time stands still, while the interior "rhythmic pressures" manifest themselves through the extremely subtle retraction of the camera positioned at a slightly low angle that draws the viewer's attention to the space outside the frame: whether the area above the sitting men is roofed, to what extent the change of the shot's composition—synchronized with continous chromatic alterations—is based on plausible motivation (the shot opens as a chromatic image which gradually changes into a sepia tone, and concludes as a virtually black and white photograph)? When the rain unexpectedly begins to pour in the foreground (accompanied by the amplified sound of drops hitting the water), forming a shimmering circle on the pond's surface, as if reflecting the invisible sun's rays, the viewers are already captured both visually and auditorially: unconcerned about the improbability of the occurrence, together with the protagonists, they feel paralyzed by the "mysterious energy" of the Zone. One cannot resist here the idea that, perhaps, Tarkovsky had in

mind the real devastated region near Cheliabinsk where, in 1957, a chemical explosion of nuclear material occurred, and was never officially reported. (Coincidentally, the restricted area inside the 30-kilometer radius of Chernobyl is now referred to as the "zone," with its own central room called "the sarcophagus," which encloses the damaged No. 4 reactor with concrete.)



Stalker

Probably the most fascinating dream image in *Stalker* takes place in the Zone's "Dune Room," covered with numerous small sand craters. Everything that occurs in this room is perceived as a "close-up of time," i.e., movement in slow motion. At one point, two black birds enter the screen from the left and right foreground, flying toward the other end of the room; just before they reach the back (brightly lit) wall, the first bird disappears (through an optical trick), as the other lands naturally on a sand dune, producing a cloud of slowly billowing dust. Visually fascinated, most viewers are uncertain what actually happened on the screen—or whether it happened at all—and feel a spontaneous desire to see the shot again. Such a self-referential directorial gesture intensifies a hallucinatory ambiguity through a merger of the representational appearance of the event and the surrealist execution of the shot. The composition of the image, its chromatic fluctuation which lasts for a considerable period of time, together with the "strangeness" of the environment (the disappearing bird; the slow-moving dust that floats above the ground; the eccentric design of the room) not only mirrors the mood of the protagonists, but also provokes a hallucinogenic-like experience in the viewer. (Some effects achieved by Tarkovsky are reminiscent of U.S. "underground" or experimental films of the sixties in this respect.)

In *The Mirror*, a dreamlike impact is achieved by tracking shots that follow Masha's friend Lisa running through the long corridor (happily relieved from the fear of misspelling Stalin's name in the newspaper galleys Masha was correcting); as she contentedly jumps while running, the motion is slightly decelerated, which creates an illusion of her body floating in the air. The surreal effect occurs at the right place (in the thematic/narrative sense) —rhythmically synchronized with the heroine's feeling of elation—thereby paralleling the mood of recollection that prevails in the sequence. Other times, mostly in the interior sequences, Tarkovsky arranges the objects and actors within the frame in such a way that the *mise-en-scène* defies physical laws as well as ordinary credibility. In the shot of Ignat's mother's levitation, the portions of the shot that would otherwise provide visible clues to the optical trick are erased by means of lighting, framing, and camera movement: perceptually disarmed, viewers are immersed in the composition of the image, instinctively accepting it as a visualization of the young protagonist's inner world, above all, love for his mother.

Tarkovsky pays particular attention to two subjects that have always been of prime interest to great cineasts—the natural landscape and the human face. For him the camera is an exploratory device capable of capturing *l'esprit de paysage* "graphically and instantly, with photographic precision, so that the audience's emotions become akin to those of a witness, if not of the author."[6] To achieve this, Tarkovsky often alters the natural appearance of the referent both in front of the camera as well as in the post-production process, yet without disturbing the ontological authenticity of the motion picture image. Thus in the opening shots of *The Mirror*, a vast field of buckwheat is "miracu-

lously caressed" by a gust of wind—a view that, as Tarkovsky admits, "has stayed in my memory as one of the distinctive and essential details of my childhood."[7] The film-maker's obvious intervention (the sudden gust of wind and its equally abrupt cessation) reveals "optically and immediately" the associational vibration of the author's emotional memory. In *Stalker*, as the group advances through the deserted countryside, the composition of the shots depicting the landscape becomes increasingly crowded with details in the foreground, anticipating the anxiety the three men will experience in the center of the Zone, which complies with Tarkovsky's inference that art must *transcend* and not merely *record* the outside world. For him, the camera is an explorer rather than an observer.

Pointing to Leonardo Da Vinci's portrait of a woman (shown in *The Mirror*), Tarkovsky claims that the famous painting "is powerful precisely because in it one cannot find anything that one might particularly prefer, one cannot single out any detail from the whole . . . and so there opens up before us the possibility of interaction with infinity."[8] He adheres to the same principle while showing a human face on the screen: rejecting facial expression as a way of conveying ideas, Tarkovsky attempts to "reach into our innermost feelings, to remind us of some obscure memories and experiences of our own, overwhelming us, stirring our souls like a revelation that is *impossible to interpret* [italics mine] in any particular way."[9] This attitude relates to the concept of *la photogénie* defined by Louis Delluc and Jean Epstein in the 1920s as *the* most unique feature of the film medium. It was based on the assumption that through kinesthetic movement and photographic resolution, the camera possesses a power that can extract from the human face a psycho-emotional intensity, which is considered the true "esprit de cinéma" (this is also the title of Epstein's 1955 book). Several such close-ups of the actress Margarita Terekhova (in *The Mirror*) appear inexpressibly beautiful on the screen, particularly when she turns her eyes to the lens: her piercing yet mild gaze can be compared to the perspicacious gaze Silvana Mangano casts at the viewer in Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex* (1967) when she nurses her newborn son in an empty field. Like Pasolini, Tarkovsky uses the actors' gaze to establish a direct—and self-referential—contact between their intimate emotions and the audience's instinctive perception. The way these two film-makers photograph the human face in close-up transcends the common use of the gaze in the dominant cinema as a vehicle for conveying rational messages, making it instead a means of intensifying the viewer's empathy with the character's inner world.

The phenomenological signification of Tarkovsky's oneiric vision rests on an interaction between the representational and the surreal: the viewer feels that something is "wrong" with the way things appear on the screen, but is incapable of detecting sufficient "proof" to discredit presented events on the basis of everyday logic. As a result, the shot is "estranged" poetically in the best tradition of the famous Russian Formalist poets and Constructivist artists, who insisted that viewers always be aware of experiencing a work of art as a subjective transposition of reality. This is where Tarkovsky's dream imagery differs from that of Bergman: in *Wild Strawberries*, for example, the participation of Bergman's protagonist as an old man in the events of his youth have an overtly thematic dream connotation in contrast to Tarkovsky's hero in *The Mirror*, who becomes part of the oneiric mood generated by the way the events are presented on the screen, not so much by what they mean. In one sequence young Ignat is shown in the room with the two women (his aunts?) who inexplicably disappear in the next shot. However surprising, this unexpected phenomenological incongruity is less dreamlike than the subsequent close-up of the slowly evaporating wet spot on the table at which the two women were seated a moment ago. The photographic texture of the shining surface, the fluctuating design of the spot, the changing light and color make this close-up perplexing in a way similar to the flickering effect of the old gas lamp's flame that Ignat watches as it passes through various chromatic phases on its way to extinction. The painful camera fixation on the slow changes of the light texture has a hallucinatory impact on the viewer, who begins to perceive an ordinary phenomenon in an entirely different manner: the unusual concentration on a visual aspect of a natural process (the silence is broken only by the periodic crackling of the dying flame) mystifies a common fact, creating an eerie atmosphere.

The cognitive ambiguity of Tarkovsky's shots

In the devastated "Zone" of *Stalker*

is meant to shift the viewer's attention from the representational to the transcendental meaning of the recorded event, even when the film does not deal explicitly with dream content. In *Stalker*, some of the most fascinating shots, saturated with a dreamlike mood, are generated by purely photographic means, all of which "mirror" the protagonist's frustrated mind—a psychic transposition of his desire to escape from something oppressive into something that offers freedom. From the start of the film, the visual-audio execution of the shots in the pub (whose walls look like huge abstract reliefs) inhibits the viewers' spontaneous inclination to read the image only as a representation of reality; instead, it invites viewers to immerse themselves in the languid pace of the action and its environment, identifying with the hallucinatory world in which the protagonist finds "spiritual peace."

A seeker and a pursuer, Stalker acknowledges verbally his intention of moving, together with his wife and daughter, to the Zone in order "to live in peace where nobody can hurt us." His expectations, however, fade once he and his two companions reach the central room of the Zone: the camera becomes stationary, as if trapped in an unfriendly space, while the characters move aimlessly (mostly along the axis perpendicular to the camera), creating different compositions within the shot. After dwelling on the group for a considerable period of time, the camera begins to pull back, leaving them isolated in the distance, with a (sunlit?) pond revealed through the expansion of the frame. The visual-auditory devices—which function less as graphic symbols than as powerful sensorial stimulants—convey a strong sense of alienation. This is why instead of reading *Stalker* from an ideological/biographical/psychoanalytic point of view, it seems more justified—and exciting—to examine the film's structure as the author's dream imagery rendered through cinematic devices that trigger the viewer's sensorial response.

It is not only Stalker's expedition to the Zone's underground tunnels, giant water pipes, and deteriorating metal constructions that the viewer experiences as a visualization/sonorization of the author's own psychically induced fantasy, but also the Prologue and Epilogue which take place in an apartment and a pub (surrounded by expressionistically designed walls resembling organic matter)—both conceived as alien environments in which more than the story takes place. In capturing the verbally unutterable aspect of the material world, Tarkovsky above all uses light to achieve the "opacity" (Tarkovsky's term) of the shots (e.g., the unexplained vibration and motion of the objects, the inexplicable disappearance of things, and the unexpected materialization of smoke, fog, rain, fire, wind, and floating feathers), which complements

the philosophical density of the dialogue (often conveyed through Russian slang). But each of these thematic symbols of the dream world is represented on the screen by audio-visual means that make their "ineffability" impossible to convey verbally: Tarkovsky's rain, fire, fog, wind, and earth are experienced on the screen as *cinematic* phenomena rather than perceived as a *natural* power.

Cinematic abstraction is most apparent near the end of the film, when the camera focuses on Stalker's daughter ("Monkey") whose frozen face reveals an autistic concentration: first we see only her profile occupying the foreground (as she is carried on Stalker's shoulders), her hair covered by a colorful scarf, while the landscape in the background changes from blurred contours to a vivid chromatic design of land and water—a photographic equivalent of the shot composition prevalent during the group's reconnaissance of the Zone at the beginning of the film. In the closing sequence, however, as Stalker's wife tries to ease his last moments, Monkey's facial expression parallels her father's solemn expression: staring at the two glasses (one half-filled with liquid) and a jar on the table, she looks physically relaxed, yet her gaze gives off a psychic charge. As the camera gradually pulls back over the shining surface of the table, the three objects miraculously begin to move over the table's surface toward the camera, until the tallest (empty) glass falls on the floor with an exaggerated crash. Simultaneously, the rhythmic staccato sound of the approaching train (associating, this time metaphorically, the film's end with its beginning) is mixed with the howling of a dog and the noise of a trembling table. Changing its direction of movement, the camera slowly approaches Monkey, whose eyes are closed as she rests with her head on the table, face saintly and liberated from any strain, while Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" overpowers the rumbling of a departing train. The camera comes to a close-up of the young girl, her eyes open, while the musical crescendo reaches its peak as an apotheosis to the dialectical absurdity of life—a cinematic equivalent of the statement Stalker made after realizing that the mysterious Zone is an intrinsic—and necessary—aspect of human existence ("Even if it's a miracle, it's part of Nature, which offers at least some kind of hope . . .").

Tarkovsky's "spiritual revelation" (his term) of the reality in cinema defies the orthodox concept of narrative cinema as a linear progression of representational events. Creating dream imagery whose kinesthetic energy surpasses the mere observation of reality, while providing a unique experience that is possible only in cinema, Tarkovsky proves that genuine experimentation in art does not mean merely using optical devices, but achieving a complex cinematic structure, "the form of which comes nearest to conveying the author's inner world and embodying his longing for the ideal."[10] All creative film-makers have been preoccupied with the problem of expressing both *ideas* and *ideals* in visual (and audial) terms, thereby defying the belief that this medium is fit exclusively for physical action and dramatic performances.

In his best works, Tarkovsky has demonstrated in a creative manner that it is possible to achieve poetic dream imagery within the narrative genre, provided that the story is transcended by the kinesthetic impact capable of generating (here Tarkovsky cites Thomas Mann) "something spiritually broader and more universal than mere facts, an entire world of feelings, thoughts, and visions embodied within it."[11] Evidently, the most intense feeling of spirituality which Tarkovsky experiences in his dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations cannot be conveyed through the spoken word alone, but most of all by cinematic images that represent the author's "impressions created by the logic of dream, and formed in a way most appropriate to the thinking or dreaming process."[12]

Notes

1. Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), p. 188.
2. Ibid., p. 114.
3. Ibid., p. 114.
4. Ibid., p. 130.
5. Ibid., p. 198.
6. Ibid., p. 177.
7. Ibid., p. 133.
8. Ibid., p. 108.
9. Ibid., p. 108.
10. Ibid., p. 104.
11. Ibid., p. 104.
12. The citation is taken from Tarkovsky's celebrated 1982 lectures delivered at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome, as recorded in Donatella Baglivo's video tape *Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in Cinema* (1983).

Reviews

Do the Right Thing

Produced, written, and directed by Spike Lee. Photography: Ernest Dickerson. Music: Bill Lee. Editor: Barry Alexander Brown. Universal.

Young, gifted, and bankable, Spike Lee is the first black film-maker America has looked at seriously. Forebears there were, but despite the ongoing work of recovery and reclamation—of Oscar Micheaux, of the All-American Newsreels, of all the anonymous workers in a segregated industry —they remain obscure, names known to archivists alone. The spaces opened up by the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the "blaxploitation" cycle of the early 1970s were limited and the few anomalies who squeezed in—Melvin Van Pebbles (*Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, 1971) and Gordon Parks *père* (*Shaft*, 1971) and *fils* (*Superfly*, 1972)—soon found their Hollywood dreams deferred. Of the 25 films recently deemed sacrosanct by the Film Preservation Board, only one—Gordon Parks's *The Learning Tree* (1969)—is by a black American, a nod to affirmative action not a mark of aesthetic qualification.

So Lee is different, unprecedented in the history of American film and culture. He makes movies that play in multiplex malls, that inspire think pieces in *The New Republic* and *National Review*, that spark serious discussions on *Oprah* and *Nightline*. Most significantly, though, his quick elevation to the ranks of marquee auteur is unquestionably a promotion on merit. The visible skill and manifest originality of his progressively ambitious work silences the whispers of tokenism and special treatment that demean so much black achievement in the post-movement era. On the cover of *American Film*, Lee is suited up in a Dodger uniform, the Jackie Robinson of another American pastime, a pioneer with all the privilege and pressure that comes with crossing frontiers.

In a summer of comicbook superheroes and sequels by-the-numbers, *Do the Right Thing* was the only mainstream release that came within boombox range of a concept. What's more, it blasted out the one issue that almost never disturbs the American screen, the nature of race relations in America *today*—not a retreat back in time to Jim Crow Mississippi or a displacement in space to the smug anti-apartheid politics of, say, *Lethal Weapon II* (the summer blockbuster that, with typical pop-cult schizophrenia, demonizes South African *herrenvolk* at the same time it situates its black lead on a toilet with his trousers at his ankles). Even if *Do the Right Thing* were not accomplished, activist, and acid-tongued, it would stand out as a rebuke to what usually passes for socially conscious cinema as well as to cineastes whose idea of an urgent black and white issue is colorization.

An acute businessman and a passionate advocate, Lee has won a twin victory over what he calls "the cutthroat film industry." Though the name of his production company ("Forty Acres and a Mule") bespeaks the modest aspirations of a sharecropper, he may well end up owning the mansion on the hill. Involving himself in financing, marketing, and promotion, he plays a skillful hand against a stacked deck. He also knows the importance of keeping product in the pipeline. After Columbia botched the distribution of *School Daze*, he quickly cut a deal with Universal for the next project. "It's important I follow up *School Daze* right away," he wrote in the movie journal published with *Do the Right Thing*. "This is crucial, no recent black film-maker has been able to go from film to film like the white boys do."

If Lee's managerial attitude is money-wise, his artistic stance is blood loyal. Refusing to filter black life through a racial prism, to record a dialogue in which whites name the topic and define the terms, he sets his sights at street level and frames his own conversations. As Toni Morrison wrote in *Beloved*, "definitions belong to the definers not the defined." Committed to projecting black experience through its own lens, Lee brings to American cinema a strategy that has animated black literature since the Harlem Renaissance.

It is a militant aesthetics that cuts both ways. With whites literally out of the picture, blacks bear a greater burden of blame for their choices, failures, and lives. In his journal, Lee writes that "Black people cannot be held responsible for racism. We are not in that position. We are, and have been, the victims." However, his films consistently refuse to grant any dispensation for victim status. As early as his project for NYU, *Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads* (1983), the admonition is to look inside, to the souls of black folk, not outside to the support of white folk. Hence the double edge to the numbers racketeer in the film, a black mobster who preaches the gospel of economic self-sufficiency and personal uplift. In seizing control of the local rackets from the Mafia, he has done the right thing—and though a parasite on the community, he is at least *of* the community. Not incidentally, *Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop* introduced the Lee wit along with the wisdom. "He just needs direction," says a social worker about one of her young charges. Pointing east, her companion cries, "Rikers Island is that way!"

Lee's first feature film, made on the storied shoestring budget (an hilarious trailer had the director hawking athletic socks on the streets of New York to secure financing), was the feminist *She's Gotta Have It* (1986). A double-barrelled defiance of stereotypes (racial and sexual), it featured a free-spirited siren named Lola Darling getting not only her share of the antecedent but the better of three would-be black knights. Fluid, frank, and really funny, it was also well timed: had it been closer to the epidemic of minority AIDS, it would have missed its moment.

From sex and color Lee moved to class and color in his second film, the underrated *School Daze* (1988), a reworking of the director's own undergraduate years at Morehouse College. Again, the focus was *intra*-racial, the issue the meaning of black brother- (and sister-) hood. It builds to a harrowing climax, an act of willful self-degradation wherein the hotshot sorority sister and a male pledge engage in sex at the behest of the fraternity kingpin. Prostitution is the logical culmination and appropriate metaphor for what the pair has been doing throughout the film: sacrificing personal integrity for social ambition, black identity for white assimilation.

Though hardly a black version of *Animal House*, the film is more noteworthy for its hijinks than highmindedness. Lee's call to student protest paled against his portrait of student life—the dance craze "da butt," the brief vogue for Washington DC's indigenous go-go music, the ritual chants and choral dancesteps of the black fraternity system, and, strikingly, the casual expose of the social shadings to pigmentation among the talented tenth. Reversing the color hierarchy of Oscar Micheaux, Lee set the "high yeller" Wannabees against the deep-dark "Jigaboos," hypocrisy against authenticity, in a hair-curling musical interlude called "Straight and Nappy."

The alarm bell polemical line ("WAKE UP!") notwithstanding, *School Daze* rang truest as a series of finely drawn character studies. Lee's penchant for extended speechifying never quite managed to smother his generosity of spirit or his insights into private motives. On camera, each voice gets a fair hearing, each character a fair shake. Thus, the anti-apartheid organizer Dap Dunlap may be politically correct, but he's also a major pain in the neck; the sharecropper's son Grady is understandably reluctant to jeopardize his chance at a college education to fulfill Dap's agenda; and even the odious frat leader Big Brother Al-might-ty scores a direct hit when he sneers at Dap's naive Garveyism: "Back to Mother Africa, that's bullshit. We're all Black *Americans*. You don't know a goddamn thing 'bout Africa. I'm from *Chi-town*."

Above all, Lee himself is riveting. The hormonal urgency of his performance as Mars Blackmon in *She's Gotta Have It* ("please baby, please baby, please baby, baby, baby, please!") gave way to a wrenching desperation in his portrayal of Half-Pint, the fraternity pledge only too willing to withstand whatever ritual humiliation the BMOCs can conjure. Like Woody Allen, the director's attempts to submerge his acting persona into an ensemble are never quite successful: he's always more magnetic than the rest of the crew. He's also more bottled up, tightly wound, pissed off. Unlike Robert Townsend—for a short time, the synchronicity of the timing of *She's Gotta Have It* and *Hollywood Shuffle* paired these two directors who have nothing in common but youth, talent, and color—Lee has an edge, a bitterness, one that probably owes as much to height as color.

As with the blaxploitation cycle, part of the appeal of Lee's films is pure ethnography: his people and stories are simply not accorded a celluloid rendering anywhere else. Hollywood has absolutely no idea what these folks are about. Coppola and Scorsese know the Italians, Allen and Brooks the Jews, Spielberg and Hughes the whitebread 'burbs, but no brandname director has inside-dopster access to the vernacular, manners, and values of black America, still less the black underclass. Lee—a product of the black middle class to be sure—is as close as mainstream American cinema is likely to get.

In *Do the Right Thing* the director crossed the color line. On the hottest day of the summer, black subculture rubs against white culture and ignites a conflagration that burns them both. Set on the streets of Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant, the main locus of activity is Sal's Famous Pizzeria, a hangout that serves up hot slices and heated dialogue, cheese being extra. Sal (Danny Aiello), the proprietor, is a crusty small businessman who employs his two rather dimwitted sons, the bigot Pino (John Turturro) and the befuddled Vito (Richard Edson), and a shiftless deliveryman, Mookie (Lee). Outside the pizzeria—on stoops, sidewalks, in sweltering apartments—a parade of characters mingle in a sun-drenched mosaic of tracking shots and angular compositions: the expository d.j. with the nonstop patter, Mister Señor Love Daddy (Sam Jackson), three Corner Men doing the dozens and acting as Greek chorus (Paul Benjamin, Robin Harris, and Frankie Faison), the self-styled "da Mayor" (Ossie Davis), the watchful matriarch Mother Sister (Ruby Dee), the glaring agitator Buggin' Out (Giancarlo Esposito), the boom box-toting Radio Raheem (Bill Nunn), a Mom and Pop pair of Korean grocers (Steve Park and Ginny Yang), and the brain-addled Smiley (Roger Guenveur Smith) waving the famous photo of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, shaking hands and forcing smiles.

The title sequence is a showcase for the editing skills of Barry Alexander Brown and the feverish choreography of Rosie Perez (who doubles as Mookie's long-suffering girlfriend Tina). In three different outfits, she's quick-cut punching out an athletic hip-hop to Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." Dreamy pull backs, long takes, and off-kilter close-ups (Lee calls them "Chinese angles" after the awed, skewed gaze of the kung fu films)

Buggin' Out (Giancarlo Esposito) in *Do the Right Thing*

define the directorial style; the color scheme is steamy yellow and dull red, a cinematographic slow burn conjuring the equatorial oppression of summer in the city. Location shoot notwithstanding, this feels like a soundstage neighborhood, clean, drug-free, secure. Like Sam Goldwyn in *Dead End*, Lee removes the unsightly refuse from his ghetto streets. Still, neither authorial control nor commercial success has dulled Lee's street reflexes. The vertiginous tight close-up of Buggin Out after a hapless Celtics fan (John Savage) scuffs his Air-Jos is a sidewalk vignette accessible only to the kind of director who still personally scouts his locations on bicycle. He remains as fluent in street patois as film grammar.

Like most socially conscious cinema, the film is at its worst when it tries hardest to articulate its Meaning. A race-conscious exchange between Mookie and Pino plays like an instructive afternoon special on PBS. In sports, movies, and music, the Italian's subconscious is as colonized by black American performers (Magic Johnson, Eddie Murphy, and Prince) as his conscious is poisoned by racism. The rhetorical premediation with which Mookie sets up Pino is plausible; the ability of this racist working-class Italian to quote verbatim the

words of Louis Farrakhan is not. Tellingly, the film's falsest moments come at the limits of Lee's own iconoclasm. Jesse Jackson (whose New York primary ads Lee directed) and "Minister Farrakhan" (whose personal bodyguards provided security for the location shoot) are sacred figures, beyond satire. Lee exults in stinging the brothers over style—announcing the torrid weather forecast, Mister Señor Love Daddy issues a "jerry curl alert," and Buggin Out gets what may be the single best shot in a screenplay loaded with them when one of the Corner Men tells him to "boycott that goddamn barber that fucked up your hair"—but over some things he is not willing to break ranks. In the interest of racial solidarity, Lee sometimes puts his brain on hold: a scrawled injunction in graffiti—"Tawana Told the Truth"—is displayed conspicuously and unironically when Mookie warns his sister Jade (Joie Lee) to stay away from what he does not see as the innocent paternal attentions of Sal.

Still, it is a measure of the triumph of the intuitive over the ideological that the humanism of the old pros, not the militancy of the young toughs, attracts the deepest affections of both Lee and the audience. Backed by a *Showboat*-era musical motif, Ossie Davis's "Da Mayor" presides with dignity over his sidewalk community—and commands every sequence he occupies. Likewise, Danny Aiello's warmth in two key "character-building" scenes—a moving conversation with his son explaining his pride in feeding pizza to the community's kids and the smitten welcome he gives to the beautiful Jade—lends Sal a full dimension of personality denied Buggin Out, Radio Raheem, or Mookie. On this point, St. Clair Bourne's documentary record of the location shoot, *Making Do the Right Thing* (1989), offers an intriguing glimpse into the way an actor can overwhelm an auteur. In a discussion about Sal's character, Lee declares flatly that he thinks Sal is a racist. Aiello disagrees—and on the screen if not in the screenplay his portrayal wins the argument.

But always simmering on, not below, the surface of the heart-warming moments provided by Da Mayor, Mother Sister, and Sal, is the white heat of racism. The interethnic, interracial animosity explodes in a montage of face-front slurs—blacks slam Italians, Italians slam blacks, Latins slam Koreans, whites slam Latins, Koreans slam Jews—that serve as warm-ups for the ultimate bonfire. The immediate kindling is Buggin Out's presumptuous call for Sal to add a "brother" to the portraits on his American-Italian Wall of Fame, but the spark that sets off the community is Radio Raheem's stadium-wattage sound system.

As an Ur-symbol of interracial animosity and class style wars, the boom box is a perfect radiator for black anger and white noise (and vice versa). Next to semi-automatic weaponry, the ghetto blaster is the easiest way for the underclass to exact vengeance and aggression on an unwary bourgeois. In New York, Boston, Chicago—any metropolis with public transportation—a black youth strolling onto a subway car with his personal, multidecibel sound track sends up red-alert signals and draws out palpable racial vibes. An urban commonplace, it has become something of a mass-media leitmotif. In *The Survivors* (1983), Robin Williams comically counsels Walter Matthau to aim for a black teenager's boom box because without music "they lose the will to fight"; in *Star Trek IV* (1986), Spock silences an obnoxious punk rocker with a Vulcan pinch; and, in the most vivid exposure of the racial undertones of the musical overmix, a commercial for the NY yellow pages features a boom box blaring rap music as a mild accountant type methodically opens his briefcase, assembles a sledgehammer, and pounds the offending black box into scrap. Lee—who knows his public transportation as well as his Public Enemy—is the only director capable of shouldering the boom box from the other side of the speakers.

Powered by 20 "D" batteries, Radio Raheem makes his entry to the beat-machine blare of rap music, specifically the tough agit-rap of Public Enemy. Like every other musical subgenre from the Delta blues to downtown disco, rap has been neatly contained and regrooved by the entertainment conglomerates it originally arose in opposition to. Not all rap groups, however, have been domesticated by ad jingles or heavy rotation on MTV. Public Enemy—currently in disarray over the anti-Semitic tirades of its "Minister of Information"—is not politically engaged in the approved I-ain't-gonna-play-Sun-City mold; these guys are authentically bad in the Webster Dictionary sense. To pressure cooker backbeats they spew out incendiary lyrics less shocking for their obscenity than for their

Bill Nunn as Radio Raheem in *Do the Right Thing*

casual blasphemy of the most sacred icons of American culture ("Elvis was a hero to most/but he never meant shit to me/you see/ straight out racist/ the sucker was/simple and plain/motherfucker! ain't John Wayne").

Egged on by Buggin Out, Radio Raheem turns up the volume on Sal and Sal explodes in apoplectic rage, pounding the radio to scrap with a baseball bat. Radio Raheem lunges for Sal's throat and all hell breaks loose. The established rhythm of slow tracking shots and extended takes explodes in a cacophony of violent noise and quick-cut action. The riot pours out into the street, the cops arrive and strangle Radio Raheem to death in what Lee describes as "the infamous Michael Stewart chokehold." Here the casting of Nunn—a man of imposing build, whose enraged character has just been forcibly removed from a middle-aged man's throat, who is struggling with manic frenzy—may have worked against the demonization of the cops. Also, the killing scene itself is poorly rendered cinematically: the choke-hold seems too brief and unlikely to inflict death. Regardless, the crowd sees the death as a summary execution. With calm deliberation, Mookie—heretofore a shiftless worker and an absent father, whose girlfriend has to order a pizza to get him to come by and visit his son—tosses a garbage can through Sal's window and sets off the fire this time. The community becomes a wailing, destructive mob and Sal watches helplessly as the flames engulf his life's work.

After the epochal firebombing of the pizzeria, a brief coda is careful to exculpate Mookie and the citizenry from guilt and thus prevent Sal from becoming a martyr to misdirected black rage—we are assured that the insurance will recoup his loss. The same equivocation motivates the closing credit crawl that pairs dueling statements from Martin Luther King and Malcolm X on What Is To Be Done. King's sentiment is idealistic and Gandhian, Malcolm's is pragmatic and Jeffersonian—and totally noncontroversial, simply according to the governed the right to withdraw consent from oppressive authority and take up arms. Like Smiley peddling his grainy photo, like Radio Raheem's own imitation of Robert Mitchum's love-hate preaching from *Night of the Hunter*, Lee's two-roads-diverge strategy unifies two main lines of the civil rights movement and puts side by side two men who had little use for one another. It also sidesteps the meaning of the imperative title. As vague on causation as solution, the director seems really certain only about one mitigating factor—the weather.

Lee has sneered at a mass (not just white) audience upset because *Do the Right Thing* didn't conclude with Mookie and Sal joining arms to sing "We Are the World." But the wider cultural matrix around the movie—the ancillary marketing (book, T-shirts, CDs), public relations (Lee has become a designated media spokesman for black America), and, one assumes, Academy Award recognition—offers more hope for reconciliation and progress than the fiery climax. (By the way, the album jacket for the sound track actually *does* feature Sal and Mookie arm and arm.) On a recent NBC special on Race in America, Lee declaimed against the "pie in the sky" ethos of America that promises reward for hard work and initiative. "Your own example disproves your point," Boston University president John Silber snapped at him. Just as Tracy Chapman can no longer sing "Mountain o' Things"

with a straight face, this authentic success story and uneasy Positive Role Model is going to find it increasingly difficult to invey against racist limitations. The soothing, smothering embrace of American culture may yet blunt the sharpness of Spike Lee and modulate the volume on his dissonant rap.

THOMAS DOHERTY

The Home and the World

Director: Satyajit Ray. Script: Ray, based on the novel by Rabindranath Tagore. Photography: Soumendru Roy. Music: Ray. Editing: Dulal Dutta.

In India, a woman's identity never belongs to her. It is wholly defined by her relationship to others. The patriarchal Indian tradition always forces her to play what it deems the appropriate role of the daughter/sister/wife/mistress/daughter within the narrow confines of the Indian family structure. The role of "wife" is a particularly constricting one, and Satyajit Ray in his latest film *The Home and the World* sets out to explore how Bimala, his heroine, struggles to redefine herself as "wife" and "mistress" in a determined effort to free herself from the traditional definitions of these two roles as imposed and insisted upon by her husband Nikhil and her lover Sandip.

Ray's film, to a large extent, is a faithful adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's novel of the same name which was published in 1919. The film very sensitively portrays a wife's confused passion, a husband's misguided nobility, and a lover's shrewd exploitation of these qualities to suit his own selfish and Machiavellian ends. Both husband and wife suffer, but since the lover conveniently exits, and the husband pays the price by getting killed, it is the wife who ultimately gets victimized by the powerful, Hindu forces of the period's male hegemony.

In Tagore's novel, there were three distinct points of view—Bimala's, Nikhil's, and Sandip's. In the film, however, it is Bimala who significantly becomes the focus of Satyajit Ray's gaze. We see her seduced by two different worlds, in which her liberation is promised but never delivered. Each world, and the culture it personifies, becomes in the film a strategic *mirror*, in which both men try to impose their own version of the Hindu woman they want Bimala to become. Their ownership of Bimala is determined by the measure of success that each achieves. The mirroring device becomes the film's central motif, and Ray uses it masterfully to chronicle the painful odyssey of a woman whose image is never fated to be her own.

The first mirror in the film, in which Bimala is made to function, is the Anglophile world of the English governess, Miss Gilby. Nikhil hires her to teach his wife the English language, Highland songs, piano playing, and the attainment of proper British etiquette as observed in social rituals, like the correct pouring of tea for invited guests. Miss Gilby teaches Bimala a particular English song that becomes, in the film, a very important leitmotif of this Doll's House universe:

> Tell me the tales that to me were so dear
> Long long ago, long long ago.
> Sing me the songs that I wanted to hear
> Long long ago, long ago.

When Ray frames only Miss Gilby singing this song, it evokes, very poignantly, this Englishwoman's own, isolated condition, expressing her longing for the green shores of England. Then when Ray cuts to Bimala singing this song alone in the frame, it designates Bimala's forced emancipation from her Indian moorings, and enunciates her educative progress in obtaining some kind of mastery over another culture's language and customs. But when Ray focuses in the next shot on both women singing this song in unison within the same frame, we see the divided selves of each, confronting one another. Although they belong to separate cultures, the women share a common identity since both are controlled by Nikhil. One is playing the role of "teacher" and the other is playing the role of "student" for this zamindar. Later, after Bimala has been smitten by her first glimpse of Sandip and is preparing herself in her bedroom to invite him for tea the next day, we see her singing the same song she has been taught. As she sings it, she picks up Sandip's portrait from the mantlepiece, and directly addresses it with a very suggestive verse from the song we have not hear before:

> Now that you're come
> All my grief is removed.
> Let me forget that
> So long you have wooed.

Ray very shrewdly alerts us to the new direction that Bimala's eros is going to take. Nikhil is present in the room and watching her; and through this song, Bimala is already indicating to him that she is unwilling to be the recipient of his suffocating kind of love, and that she would like to be wooed by another man. Ray strengthens this resolve through carefully planted Hindu signifiers. When Nikhil, irritated by this English song, asks Bimala to sing a Bengali song, Bimala switches to a Mira bhajan (devotional song), in which that famous married Rajput

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princess openly confesses her love for Krishna and asks this love god to come quickly and consummate her passion. By fusing the Sandip/Krishna icons, Bimala's yearning to explore eros with another man is established. Earlier on, Bimala had introduced this idea very daringly to Nikhil (and us) by declaring that she "envied Draupadi with her five husbands." (Draupadi was the joint wife of the five Pandava brothers in the Indian epic, *The Mahabharata*, and she was loved and was enjoyed by each without conflicts or jealousy.)

Bimala's unique position in Ray's text lies in her honesty in recording, like a Bengali Lady Genji, the intimate details of the psychological struggle between her eroding loyalty towards her husband and her increasing fascination with his best friend. This is conveyed through her frequent voice-overs. Both Nikhil and Sandip are viewed through her sensitive consciousness. From Bimala's point of view, Nikhil is presented as an Apollonian figure who is noble but in many ways unapproachable, whereas Sandip emerges as the Dionysian force who, in spite of being potentially threatening, satisfies a lot of her repressed and unspoken desires. Ray positions Bimala in the same way as Tennyson had placed Guinevere in *Idylls of the King*. Nikhil is the Arthur figure, the noble zamindar who, in his lofty ideals, sets up difficult standards of morality in devotion, behavior, and motivations. Sandip is the Lancelot figure bringing temptation, heat, and color into Bimala's life, making her illicit eros glitter in the dark.

Nikhil creates a tiny Camelot for Bimala and himself. Initially attracted and comforted by this safe site, Bimala soon tires of it. Like Arthur, Nikhil displays a lot of unstained virtues. He does not drink or womanize. He brings Miss Gilby to educate and introduce Bimala to the modern age where the English language with its manners and customs reigns. He adorns Bimala with the colored garments of modern fashion. Whatever she asks for, he gives. He remains consecrated for her, at all times, like a prince, so full of perfection and personification of the thoroughly good man that he loses his mystery and the challenge of personality that sustain and nurture a marriage. The excitement of manliness, which is absent from this Camelot, is provided by Sandip when he comes to Bimala's neighborhood with his followers to preach the doctrine of Swadeshi. Ray positions Bimala, with the other women, sitting behind a screen to hear what Sandip has to say. Into this *mise-en-scène* Sandip makes a grand entry, seated in a big chair, which is hoisted on the shoulders of ten or twelve youths. When he begins to speak, Ray shows Bimala impatiently pushing away the screen from before her face. From this moment Sandip becomes the consuming object of her gaze. What is courageous on Bimala's part

Satyajit Ray directing *The Home and the World*

is her utter willingness to be swept away in a Laurentian roar of fire, passion, and flood. She understands the nature of this current on which she is so precariously balanced, and she boldly advances and retreats on it "open eyed." She comes to acknowledge it openly in the true spirit of that other spiritual sister of hers—Charulata.

As the typical nineteenth-century, aristocratic, Bengali housewife, in Ray's 1964 film, Charu was forced to function within the traditional boundaries that her position as a Hindu wife in the patriarchal joint-family structure allowed. She was expected to stitch (which we saw her doing in the film's credit sequence, embroidering a "B" on her husband's handkerchief); supervise all domestic chores; serve meals to her husband; and cultivate her idle moments in the practice of gently feminine pastimes like playing cards, embroidery, reading, playing the piano, and decorating herself for her spouse. Writing, of course, was a male prerogative, and both Amal, her lover and Bhupati, her husband, felt very threatened when Charu's writing got published for the first time in an important Bengali literary journal. It was very daring, then, on Charu's part to signal her emancipation from such a routine by boldly expressing her attraction towards her husband's younger cousin, Amal. And this was made explicit to us by Ray in the "garden," overflowing with the writing and recitation of poetry, bright sunshine, and deep lurking passions.

In that scene, Amal is on the ground, writing and reading; and Charu is seated on a swing, observing him. This sunlit garden becomes a very important strategic spot in the film, where we see Charu's conscious definition of her hidden desires, not only presented to us, but also to herself. Ray, however, has implied the ultimate direction of this gaze all along: the embroidered exercise-book that she had stitched for Amal, and on which he is now writing his poems solely for her; the brand-new slippers she has hidden in her cupboard, and which she hopes to surprise him with; her insistence that Amal eat only the betel-leaf, which she prepares; her mending of all his torn clothes. All these small events

occur so innocuously in the film that Amal, the spectator, and even Charu, seem to miss the real intent till this consistent gaze of Charu's fuses them together.

By shooting the entire scene from Charu's vantage point on the swing, Ray conveys very accurately and subtly the changes of desire occurring within her at this crucial moment. We only see what Charu's gaze selects for herself and us. The exuberance of the editing, every time Charu's feet hit the ground while she is on the swing, literally and psychologically elevates her desires to ascending levels of bliss. The dizzying see-saw reflects the blur of her own passions, precariously at tilt, here, in the newly found outdoor sanctum. After she stops swinging, a cool and collected Charu now trains her lorgnette brazenly on Amal. As his magnified face appears in close-up prominently before her, we realize that Charu has confronted herself openly and freely with her forbidden desires.

Following Charu's example, Bimala's eros enables her to make an important distinction between the "emancipation" that Nikhil offers her and the "infatuation" which Sandip overpowers her with. She opts for the latter since she finds her presence more authenticated by it. As an emancipated wife, she felt decorated and constantly surveyed by Nikhil, especially in all the ways she was constantly asked to manifest her presence to him. As an infatuated woman, however, the surveyor in herself is given free reign to express how *she* would like to appear to the lover which her eros has chosen. Then when her presence is newly appreciated, Bimala can transform herself into an active and attractive object of vision, instead of appearing as a passive, decorative object.

Although Nikhil wants to free Bimala in the style of the "great women [as he tells his widowed sister-in-law] who were never in purdah," he adds, in a patriarchal manner, that "man must have his fancies too." Ray establishes his patriarchal intent when he shows Nikhil watching the spectacle of Bimala preparing herself for him before her bedroom mirror. He has forced a narcissism on her, and we see Bimala constantly making and unmaking herself as the sexual object for her lord and master. When Sandip meets Bimala for the first time at tea the next day, he imposes another kind of narcissism on her by granting her the twin titles of "Mother Goddess" and "Queen Bee." Her "feminine intuition," which Nikhil regularly teases her about, is quick to acknowledge Sandip's dual personification of her femininity: as the powerful "mother," who can preserve and nurture, *and* as the sexual "queen," who can attract and entice. In the emancipatory mirror, offered by Nikhil, we are made to witness a woman who is reduced to a decorative object. When we see Sandip granting Bimala the privilege of infatuation, we see how Bimala is provided with an opportunity to express herself for the first time as an attractive object for a man whom *her* eros has chosen. But even in Sandip's emancipatory mirror, she is reduced to functioning as a sexual prisoner. He woos her endlessly with his public oratory of the Swadeshi cause, only because he wants her to sexually surrender herself to him. Ray positions his heroine tragically, thus, between the mirrors of one man's ineffectual enlightenment, and another's sybaritic, sexual politics.

The *mise-en-scène* during the tea sequence establishes Bimala's growing attraction towards Sandip. He is gradually shown as becoming the consuming object of her gaze. And Ray registers this evocatively by a careful arrangement of tracking shots and slow zooms that first draw Bimala's eros to the surface, and then target it on the man as a sexual object. Ray places Nikhil and Bimala on the sofa together. Sandip sits opposite them on a chair. Abruptly, we see Sandip getting up to sing a stirring patriotic song. This song is aimed directly at Bimala. As he sings, the camera is focused directly on Sandip from behind Nikhil's head. It slowly tracks, till it comes to rest behind Bimala's head. Then, from her perspective, Ray slowly and very unobtrusively zooms in on Sandip's passionate, singing face. A reverse zoom follows, this time from Sandip to Bimala's face, completely enthralled by his song. As the zooms accelerate, they are intercut with medium shots of all three of them, in which Nikhil is often seen removing his glasses and wiping them. Such an action brilliantly registers the gradual loss of the wife from the husband's gaze. The repeated zooms, on the other hand, seem to bring Bimala and Sandip closer together in an implied space from which Nikhil has been evicted.

In another scene between Sandip and Bimala, Ray registers their growing awareness of each other through the important signifier of a particular brand of British cigarette that Sandip is shown smoking. For all his *swadeshi* politics (in which the banning of all English goods was the most distinctive principle), Sandip cannot bear to smoke an Indian brand. He smokes a popular British brand in which a "Pompadour" logo on the cigarette packet is represented by a flirtatious lady in a large, flouncing dress. Although Bimala has been told by Nikhil that "our Sandip has had many affairs of the heart with women, not all of them *swadeshi*," she coquettishly picks up the "Pompadour" packet, stares at the lady on it, and then, in a sly whisper, murmurs half to herself and half to Sandip; "I know you won the hearts of many . . ." leaving the sentence deliberately unfinished. With this wonderfully staged moment, Ray displays Bimala wanting to prove to Sandip that *swadeshi* women, like herself, can be as attractive and as seductive as that British lady with the flouncing dress on

the cigarette packet. And the fact that she is dressed in this scene in a very bold red saree, only for his benefit, emphasizes this sexual claim, for a red saree is exactly what a traditional Bengali woman wears on the day of her marriage. She is actually hinting to Sandip that she is preparing herself for her seduction. So the next time when they meet, Sandip confirms this expectation by telling Bimala that the thrill of politics is far inferior to the thrill a man like him feels when faced with the challenge of "winning the heart of a woman" like her.

Another revealing scene between the two enables Ray to express the confusion and arrest that assail both partners temporarily before they can make their actual plunge into illicit passion. The moment occurs when Bimala says that she is prepared to offer Sandip any amount of money for the *swadeshi* cause, should he need it. Although the offer is genuine, there is a deeper implication. The gender roles of a normally active Sandip and a quietly passive Bimala are suddenly reversed in this scene. It is Bimala who is now constantly shown circling the stationary Sandip. She seems to be completely absorbed by his presence. We can sense her desire to elicit from him a response to her offer, in which politics and desire are powerfully comingled. The normally ebullient Sandip is shown in a completely stunned posture as Bimala continues to literally make circles round him. When he fails to respond to this new version of Bimala, she resignedly moves to go, thereby prompting him to finally act in the way she has wanted him to all along. He runs and blocks her exit and grasps her hands. She does not resist because she wants him to control this relationship from now on. She has literally put herself into his strong arms. The dominant positions in Sandip's patriarchal mirror have changed; Ray allows his heroine a brief victory before the storm breaks, and Bimala is confronted by Sandip's true designs.

When Bimala goes to present the gold sovereigns (which she has stolen from her husband's treasury) to Sandip, Ray shows him unable to restrain himself. Fascinated by the gold, we see him spring forward as if to embrace Bimala. Repulsed by his avariciousness, Bimala pushes him away. This is the crucial moment in the film when Bimala sees Sandip in his true colors and realizes that all his rhetoric and vows of love have been mere bluster. She thinks she is liberated from his "snaky coils" and is saved but this proves to be merely an illusion. Having triumphed over her lover (she pushes him so violently that he staggers backwards, hitting his head on the edge of a marble table before dropping to the floor half-dazed) Bimala feels uncertain in the re-establishing of connubial ties with her husband Nikhil. Under the harsh censure of the Hindu tradition on one hand, and the "noble generosity" with which she thinks Nikhil accepts her back, Bimala finds her femininity crushed and confused by guilt, which now forces her to constantly re-evaluate her position as a woman in the resumed role of the fallen wife. She longs to revert to her Camelot state again, but it is too late.

In her essay, "When the Woman Looks," Linda Williams points out that the most instructive moment in narrative cinema occurs

> when the "good girl" heroines are granted the power of the look. . . . [As Mary Ann Doane suggests,] "the woman's exercise of an active investigating gaze can only be simultaneous with her own victimization." The woman's gaze is punished, in other words, by narrative processes that transform curiosity and desire into masochistic fantasy.[1]

When a repentant Bimala weeps uncontrollably before her bedroom mirror, Nikhil takes her into his arms but refuses to block her tear-stained image, reflected in the mirror. He wants that image to portray to Bimala her fall from grace, not only in his eyes, but in her own eyes too. It is only then that he can offer her the patriarchal privilege of his forgiveness. Ray endorses this privileged male position, most remarkably, in the film's final scene when he reduces Bimala to the position of widow through three apocalyptic dissolves. Ray's presentation very powerfully inscribes how Hinduism finally fixes Bimala and strips her of her femininity and womanhood. From the rich wife of a zamindar with luxurious hair, expensive clothes, and bedecked jewelery, the Hindu forces of her age's history reduce her, in these three cruel dissolves, to a weeping widow with shaven hair, a plain saree, and an unadorned self. This ending is more shattering than Tagore's. In the novel, Nikhil's funeral pyre had very significantly provided Bimala with a cathartic purification in her state of widowhood. Through this purification Tagore had redeemed Bimala, whose eros had plunged her into the forbidden fires of desire for another man, and had finally made her attain a defiant, stoical stance where she feared neither herself nor anybody else. Ray's final image of Bimala is just the opposite. Ray ends his film with Bimala completely emptied of her essential, female self before the all-pervasive and judgmental forces of Hinduism. Ray makes Bimala the inevitable victim of her period's history which finally forces her to occupy a position which is neither at home nor in the world of her time.

DARIUS COOPER

Note

1. Linda Williams, "When the Woman Looks" in Re-Vision: *Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. by Mary Anne Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, Linda Williams. (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1984), p. 85.

Book Reviews

Citizen Welles

A Biography of Orson Welles

By Frank Brady. New York: Scribner's, 1989. $24.95

Chimes at Midnight

Ed. by Bridget Gellert Lyons. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988. $14.00 paper

In overall approach as well as attitude, Frank Brady's hefty (655-page) and readable Welles biography represents a certain advance over the previous efforts of Barbara Leaming and Charles Higham, which I reviewed in these pages exactly three years ago. Eschewing the gossip of Leaming and the petty malice of Higham, Brady concentrates on Welles's work and career almost exclusively, with a balanced sympathy towards his subject that avoids either special pleading or thesis-mongering. The book's jacket informs us that Brady, who has also written biographies of Bobby Fischer, Aristotle Onassis, and Barbra Streisand, worked on this one for a decade, and the breadth of his research is often impressive: a mine of interesting information is on view here, and much of it has not been available before.

Yet as soon as one descends from this overview and starts to deal with the nuts and bolts of this book, problems begin to crop up. It pains me to say this, because Brady, whom I've never met, devotes a very flattering paragraph to my own work on Welles in his acknowledgements, and, as I've already suggested, displays an overall seriousness of attitude in dealing with Welles that deserves to be recognized; as other reviewers have noted, he has no particular ax to grind, which is something of a rarity in writers about Welles. But his handling of facts is wildly uneven. Some areas of this biography—in particular, the sections dealing with *Citizen Kane* and radio—appear to be researched much more thoroughly than others, and it won't be obvious to the unspecialized reader which sections are the more reliable ones. Not only do we rarely know Brady's sources; we're also not even sure much of the time where information stops and speculation begins. (The bibliography, by omitting a substantial number of sources alluded to in the text, comes across more like a perfunctory afterthought than as a useful tool for other Welles researchers.) And in certain areas, Brady is either confused or simply wrong about his facts.

I suspect that much of this problem comes from the difficulty of relying too much on diverse documents and trying to reconcile them all in a fluid narrative. Although it's clear that some individuals were interviewed for the book, including Roger Hill, John Houseman, Beatrice Welles, Richard Wilson, and Welles himself in one phone conversation, there is only occasional evidence of Brady checking the information imparted in these interviews against other sources; and it's equally clear that many key individuals, such as Oja Kodar, Gary Graver, and Peter Bogdanovich, were never contacted at all.

Citing a six-minute video proposal made by Welles about his *King Lear* project—a tape of Welles speaking directly to the camera which I described and quoted from in the Summer 1986 issue of *Sight and Sound*—Brady gets this mixed up with a spurious account of Welles filming bits and pieces of this proposed film on the sets of other directors, so that what he winds up with is a fanciful conflation of my account and someone else's —a six-minute tape which somehow manages to incorporate several nonexistent filmed scenes as well as a talking head describing the project. In the case of *The Big Brass Ring*, another unrealized late project, Brady seriously misdescribes the plot so that the unrequited love of one man for another becomes a "secret love affair," and turns a comment by Henry Jaglom about the project into a sentence which begins, "Orson began to believe that . . . " (In fact, Brady is often rather cavalier about reporting to us what he supposes went on in Welles's mind.) Brady states that Welles's controversial beard in Hollywood was grown for *Five Kings*; Welles himself told me it was grown for *The Green Goddess*. An alleged exchange of wisecracks be-

tween Welles and Herman Mankiewicz about the Oscar they shared for the script of *Citizen Kane* was actually an exchange *imagined* by Welles in a note that he sent to Mankiewicz. Brady claims that Welles "was pleased" by the Leaming biography, but everyone I know who was close to Welles asserts that he never read it.

In relation to a purported Welles biography by Bogdanovich, Brady writes that "Orson's only wish was that Bogdanovich would have the book published before Orson's death." Having recently begun to edit this very lengthy manuscript—which is not a biography, but an interview interspersed with numerous documents (including articles, studio memos, letters, and script extracts) and illustrations—I can state with assurance that Brady has it backwards: it was Welles and not Bogdanovich who delayed the book's publication.

It could be argued that most of the above errors are relatively minor, and many are understandable, given the notorious difficulties of researching Welles's career. But what about Brady's handling of the whole complex episode of the editing of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, which is sabotaged at the outset by his apparent assumption that Welles did all of his editing of this film in Rio, while he was organizing and shooting *It's All True?* Although Brady frequently gives indications of having studied other accounts of this crucial period, he seems unaware of the well-documented information that (1) Welles assembled a rough cut of the film with Robert Wise before he left for Rio, and (2) RKO promised and then failed to send Wise to Rio so that the editing of the fine cut could be accomplished there. While it is true that Welles received a copy of the rough cut in Rio and sent many lengthy and detailed instructions to Wise from Brazil about further editing changes (only a few of which were heeded), Brady's repeated claim that Welles edited *Ambersons* in Brazil seriously muddles one's grasp of the whole episode; and his descriptions of Welles struggling with "tens of thousands of feet of unedited film" on a Movieola in Rio—without any acknowledgement, for instance, of the prior editing done by Welles with Wise over three days and nights in Miami, immediately before Welles flew to Rio—only adds to the confusion.

Elsewhere, Brady perpetuates some misinformation from Higham about *The Fountain of Youth*—that Welles spent a month and an unseemly amount of money making this extraordinary TV pilot for Desilu—which should be definitively laid to rest. Bill Krohn, who recently went to the Desilu records for clarification, discovered that the pilot took only five days to shoot (May 8, 9, 10, 11 and 14, 1956), and that the final, all-inclusive cost was $54,896—about $5,000 more than the $49,832 Welles was originally budgeted for, but still only slightly more than half the cost of the first episode of *I Love Lucy* (about $95,000).

Even more disorder informs Brady's account of the filming of *The Merchant of Venice*. According to both Oja Kodar, who was present at the filming, and Welles himself, who spoke about it to Krohn in a 1982 interview for *Cahiers du cinéma*, this filming took place in Italy and Yugoslavia in 1969. A reel of this color film was recently shown by Oja Kodar in both Honululu and New York at separate Welles events. Brady implies that he has seen this reel, but without any visible evidence, he asserts that "these fragments," which he claims were filmed "as a promotional device," were all that Welles ever shot on the project, and that they were filmed over ten years earlier, shortly after Welles appeared in *The Roots of Heaven* (1958); in addition, through the placement of this event in his chronology, he implies that the filming was done in either England or Ireland. Assuming that any of these facts could possibly be true (and it is hard to imagine how they could be), what is one then to make of Brady's later claim that, in 1966, "Outside of acting, all of [Welles's] experience with film, for almost thirty years, was in black-and-white"?

Other confusions seem to come about because of a faulty understanding of film in general. Consider this sentence about *Othello*: "Although any particular scene might *appear* to have been filmed at one time, in one place, it was only through the patching together through the editorial process that it appeared to be an uninterrupted take." Assuming that what Brady means by "uninterrupted take" is "continuous scene," the sentence makes sense; read literally, it is unfathomable.

While it would be accurate to say that the original release version of *Touch of Evil* contains *less* of Harry Keller's footage than the longer version which has since been found and released, it is surely wrong to state, as Brady does, that it contains *none*

of Keller's footage. More debatable, but still curious, is Brady's contention that a Welles project to film *Crime and Punishment* "was eventually blue-pencilled partially because everyone realized, with the possible exception of Orson, that it might have been difficult to have improved on Josef von Sternberg's 1936 classic adaptation of the story . . . " (Has Brady seen it recently?)

After devoting this much space to carping, it is important to reiterate that the overall extensiveness of Brady's research frequently helps to make up for the unreliability of certain details. One of Brady's most fascinating and valuable discoveries involves the origins of *Mr. Arkadin* in two of the episodes scripted by Welles for his Harry Lime radio series, which clarifies a link between that film and *The Third Man* which no former commentator has managed to tease out. And his account of Welles's original two-picture contract with RKO, which appears to be backed up by a careful perusal of the relevant documents, includes several pertinent facts which are at variance with previous accounts.

There's also some valuable fresh information to be found in Bridget Gellert Lyons's impeccably researched critical edition on *Chimes at Midnight* in the Rutgers Films in Print series—above all, Lyons's lengthy interview with Keith Baxter, who played Prince Hal in the film and was around during virtually all of the shooting and most of the post-synching of the dialogue, and who imparts much more information about the film's production than is available anywhere else. Lyons has also taken the trouble of annotating the continuity script in order to pinpoint which lines come from which Shakespeare plays (or from Welles himself, in a few cases), and has gathered together an excellent selection of other materials, including eight contemporary reviews of the film, and critical commentaries by C. L. Barber, Dudley Andrew, and Michael Anderegg. Truthfully, no serious Welles scholar can afford to be without this book; the same goes for Brady's biography, however cautiously and circumspectly one has to proceed with it.

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The Bosom Serpent

Folklore and Popular Art

By Harold Schechter. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988. $17.95

The 1957 film *The Incredible Shrinking Man* tells of a "strapping six-footer who is exposed to radioactivity and finds himself, one year later, living in a dollhouse and doing battle with the family cat"(54). The film has been variously analyzed, but Harold Schechter takes the long view. *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, he writes, is actually just one in a long line of "tiny men" stories. "The History of Tom Thumbe" from 1621 is another version, as are the "Thumbling" story collected by the Grimms, "Le petit Poucet" (France), "Daumesdick," "Däumling," and "Daumerling" (Germany), "Svend Tomling" (Denmark), and so

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on; analogues are found as far afield as India and Japan. In every case, the story turns on the efforts of a thumb-sized hero to make his way in a world, and more to the point with a woman, of standard proportions. *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, in short, is a folktale variant.

So the project of *The Bosom Serpent*: to see popular or mass culture, and low horror in particular, as the preeminent vehicle for folklore in our time. *War Games* is a reflex of the "Sorcerer's Apprentice," *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* combines Stith Thompson's Motif D210 ("Transformation: Man to Vegetable Form") and Motif D1365.1 ("Plant Causes Magic Forgetfulness"), and the final hand of *Carrie* finds a precise analogue in the Grimms' "Willful Child." The category of horror designated as "exploitation" is particularly rife with urban legendry—"The Assailant in the Backseat," "The Endangered Babysitter," "The Hook," "Alligators in the Sewer," and so on. (The term "legend," in the folkloric lexicon, refers to cautionary tales that are claimed to have really happened to someone—not oneself, but a friend of a friend, or a third cousin's dentist, or whatever. "The Choking Doberman," for example, tells of a woman who returns home from shopping to find her Doberman choking on human fingers; a search of the house turns up a fingerless burglar cringing in the closet. The story circulated widely in the US in the early eighties—not as a fiction, and not as a news account attached to a single instance, but as a "third-hand" truth.) *Friday the Thirteenth* has more traditional roots, being "essentially a splatter-movie retelling of 'Hansel and Gretel.'" And *E.T.*, of course, belongs to the same "eternal child" complex that gave us that other children's classic, *Peter Pan*. "For the most part," Schechter writes, "popular narratives are nothing more (or less) than folk stories: the same spooky or amusing or salacious or cautionary tales that people have always wanted, or needed, to hear."

Schechter's chapter titles give a sense of his book's scope: "The Bosom Serpent: Folklore and Popular Art," "The Bloody Chamber: Terror Films, Fairy Tales, and Taboo," "The Giant's Toy: Thumbling in Suburbia," "The Killer Granny: Archetypes of Schlock," "The Green World: Peter Pan in America," and, as an epilogue, "The 'Jason' Legend: The Symbiosis of Popular Art and Folklore." "Popular Art" includes, for Schechter, not only film (and to a lesser extent television), but also such forms as comic books and the supermarket tabloids. Schechter's discussion of the last category—based on his year-long survey of *The Sun* and *Weekly World News*, schlock successors to the now half-respectable *National Enquirer*—is marvelously entertaining and persuasive. "COMPUTER POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL TERRORIZES BOY," "91-YEAR-OLD MOM BEARS BOUNCING BABE," "GROOM ELECTROCUTED BY HIGH-VOLTAGE BRIDE," and "AFTERSHAVE LOTION CAN BRING PEOPLE BACK FROM DEATH" are indeed pure folklore, and are indeed the stuff of low horror film and literature. I emphasize "low" here because it is Schechter's particular forte, and what distinguishes his work from, say, James B. Twitchell's (*Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*). Twitchell explores the folkloric and literary antecedents of the classic or "high" horror genres (e.g., Dracula, Frankenstein, Jekyll/Hyde) but is dismissive of recent, modern horror; nor does he work, as Schechter does, with motif indices and collections of recent urban legends. Low horror is the most understudied and undertheorized genre of modern cinema, and Schechter has gone a long way in putting these movies, and future study of these movies, in their proper context.

Schechter operates, by and large, within the limits of his claim that low horror is properly seen as folklore and the evidence for that claim (the abundance, in low horror, of identifiable tale types and motifs). In this he echoes the tendency of folklore studies to regard the business of identifying, classifying, and tracing the migrations of tales and motifs as an end in itself. Although he makes the occasional effort to historicize a certain variant or complex of variants (on which more below), and although he offers, sometimes at length and sometimes in passing, intriguing analyses of particular films, Schechter is for the most part content to identify the folkloric elements in a film or set of films and let it go at that—as though, once the text at hand is identified as a variant or repository of traditional motifs, there is nothing more to be said. Coupled with an anti-psychoanalytic bias (more on this below also), Schechter's "classify and abandon" mode makes for odd reading. It is well and

good to identify *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* as a variant of the Forbidden Chamber story complex (a complex that includes, among other things, the story of Bluebeard and the Grimms' "Fitcher's Bird"), but we are left with questions. Why the special force of this variant at this time, and what to make of the particulars of this variant (the prominence of sick family dynamics, female resistance, urban-rural tensions, and so on)? Is it really a straight-line progression from oral or literary renditions to big-screen, surround-sound projections (as Schechter silently suggests), or is there a fundamental difference between *hearing* or *reading* a tale of family cannibalism, in which every individual mind's eye can imagine what it wants) and *seeing* it in vast scale? What happens to the concept of "exploitation" in this sort of folkloric model? Is there no such thing as the "culture industry"? (The closest Schechter comes to addressing the last is his remark [147] that "Academic 'purists' will undoubtedly go on regarding the American entertainment industry as a vast, soulless power that is relentlessly trampling authentic folklore underfoot —the cultural equivalent of one of H. G. Wells's Martian war machines, busily obliterating every piece of human handiwork in its path.")

Let me go back to *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, for it is in the chapter on that film—in some respects the best in the book—that the long- and shortcomings of Schechter's approach emerge most clearly. Film criticism has produced two interpretations of the film. One is psychoanalytic, and it boils down to the view that the "shrinking man" story has to do with impotence. Certainly the film (like the novel) focuses on the hero Scott Carey's painful problems with his wife—problems that grow worse as he grows smaller. And there is, of course, the suggestive scene in which the minuscule Scott is attacked by a spider—an attack he repels by desperately plunging a pin (in Scott's grip the size of a sword) upwards into the creature as it bears down on him. The other reading is historical and political; on the basis of the fact that Scott's shrinking problem stems from a dose of radiation, it lumps *The Incredible Shrinking Man* together with other 1950s sci-fi films "which reflect that era's acute A-bomb worries" (65).

The great value of the folkloric approach (studying a text in the context of analogues from other times and places) is that it can suggest in rather precise terms where the historical ends and the transhistorical begins. Common features (that is, the features the particular text shares with its analogues) belong to the universal layer, whereas peculiar or unique features can be related to the specific economic or political circumstances in which the variant was produced. As it turns out, one of the salient common features of the far-flung tradition is the setting up of the "tiny man" against a full-sized woman—a trait that would indeed seem to suggest a fundamental concern with impotence/castration. Schechter nods reluctantly at the possibility ("sexual dysfunction") but moves quickly to the film's (and novel's) peculiarities. There are two ways, he suggests, that the modern version differs from its analogues: whereas most tiny men are travellers and their stories constructed as episodic adventures, Scott Carey is a stay-at home, a virtual prisoner of his suburban house; and whereas most tiny men are born small and stay that way, Scott Carey starts full-sized and *becomes* small. From its unique features, Schechter draws the conclusion that *The Incredible Shrinking Man* is about marriage and mortgages—a side of the 1950s that earlier readings have not taken into account. "What really unmans the hero is his deflating sense of being unable to fulfill his wife's needs: not her sexual needs (about which virtually nothing is said in either the novel or film), but her material and economic ones, which, to her beleaguered husband, are clearly overwhelming. Scott's earning power is a major issue in *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, and the film wastes no time in establishing his shortcomings as a provider" (73).

Schechter is surely right that this version of the "tiny man" story has more to do with the fifties' cult of domesticity than radiation anxiety. What is bothersome about the analysis, however, is the way in which, after situating the film in a long folkloric tradition, it turns a blind eye on the very common features it worked so hard to isolate and stares instead at the peculiar ones—those that can be related to the economic or political circumstances in which the film was produced. The pattern is consistent (*E.T.* is similarly supplied with a long genealogy of *puer aeternus* stories only to be read as a response to the Viet Nam war), and the reason seems clear enough: the only universal paradigm Schechter can

think to apply is psychoanalysis, and he doesn't like it. The result, needless to say, is a fair amount of logical sliding and intellectual ambivalence. Responding to a remark of Stephen King's to the effect that *The Incredible Shrinking Man* revolves around "the potency/impotency thing," Schechter writes: "Though there's some validity to King's point, it's hard not to feel that his reading says more about the obsessions of our own post-Masters and Johnson era than about the preoccupying concerns of post-World War II America, the time in which *The Incredible Shrinking Man* is set. To be sure, Matheson's hero suffers from an acute sense of masculine insecurity. But this feeling, I believe, has less to do with the sort of sexual performance anxiety King perceives than with a fifties phenomenon discussed by various cultural critics; namely, with a fantasy of emasculation which—for reasons having to do with that era's reigning 'cult of domesticity'—flourished in the postwar male population" (67–69). The waffling worsens:

> The central symbol of Scott's conjugal anxiety, however, is neither the doll house nor the cat but the monstrous spider that serves as Scott's *bête noire* throughout the novel and that clearly embodies the hero's perception of his wife. Discussing Matheson's book in *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King (who is given to taking cheap shots at psychoanalysis even while availing himself of its insights) scoffs at critics who, to his way of thinking, make too much of the spider's meaning. King was at a party in the fall of 1978, he recounts, when a well-known woman science fiction writer offered the following theory: "In symbolic terms, this woman said, spiders represent the vagina. Scott finally kills his Nemesis . . . by impaling it on a pin (the phallic symbol, get it, get it?)." "All of this was well-meaning bullshit," King concludes, "but bullshit is still bullshit . . . "
>
> Though King's impatience with "half-baked Freudians" is hard to fault, the symbolic relation between women and spiders has, in fact, been widely documented not only by psychoanalytic critics but by students of world folklore as well. Still, it's not necessary to invoke depth psychology or myth scholarship to establish a connection between Lou [Scott Carey's wife] and the spider, since the text itself points quite clearly to such a reading. . . .

But if sentence one of the second paragraph claims to buy a psychoanalytic reading of the spider, sentence two sells it right back, for by "such a reading," Schechter means not that spider equals vagina, but that spider equals economically draining wife and real estate taxes. Even when he invokes psychoanalytic theory, in other words, he instantly translates his way out of it—which is a way of saying that when he encounters the universals of a particular tale, the features that crop up across centuries and continents and beg for a "big-picture" explanation, he backs off, avoids, denies, shifts ground. The spider is a particularly good example, for it turns out that in an early version of the Tom Thumbe story there is an equivalent spider. "Interestingly," Schechter notes, "Tom is slain by a giant spider"—and shifts quickly to another topic. But if Scott Carey's spider means not woman herself but a piece of fifties ideology that has men yoked into marriage and mortgages, what then does Tom's spider mean? More generally, if Scott Carey's shrunken condition in relation to his vast wife is to be understood only economically and not sexually, what do we make of the similar humiliations at the hands of women endured by all his "tiny men" counterparts over the centuries? At the risk of sounding like King's despised "woman science fiction writer," I would suggest that both the dialogue and the imagery of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* could hardly be more sexually blatant and that, whatever the movie's other valences, there is no avoiding the "impotence" associations of the plot in general and the "vagina" associations of the spider episode in particular. (I might note that the audience at a recent screening of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* burst into laughter at the sight of Scott desperately stabbing his pin-sword upwards at the huge, pulsating, grasping slit in the spider's underside.) Why Schechter cannot accept the possibility that the text might mean *both* things (might mean pussy *and* purse, or be equating purse with pussy), and for that matter might be playing on radiation anxieties in the bargain, is not clear. Nor is it clear why Schechter insists on understanding psychoanalytic thought as nothing more than the identification of immutable "Freudian symbols" that have an independent life outside narrative (as

his curious distinction between "depth psychology" and "the text itself" would seem to suggest). Nor, finally, is it fair for Schechter to scold King for anachronistic responses ("post-Masters and Johnson" obsession with sexual function) when he himself fails to note that *The Incredible Shrinking Man* was made in the heyday of Hollywood's love affair with Freudian notions of exactly the most "half-baked" sort—a love affair that gave us, the previous year, a comparable horror/sf movie in which a character announces that "the monster" against which they have been battling "is from the id" ("the id," he adds, "is an obsolete term once used to describe the elementary structure of the subconscious"). Freudian film-makers, as Twitchell says, make Freudian movies—a disturbing and important possibility Schechter's "pure folklore" model does not address. Low horror may indeed be the modern repository of folklore, but to suggest, as Schechter does, that the line is straight and the reception unmediated is to dodge the most basic issues not only of recent cultural studies but also of recent folklore studies.

My point here is not to insist on the truth of psychoanalytic theory or a monolithic reading of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. It is to suggest that there is something odd about a book that undertakes to universalize modern popular art and then either backs off or actually denigrates efforts at a universal explanation, proceeding to analyze the modern instance in terms of modern events only. When Schechter does appeal to a larger framework, it is that of Jung (127–32)—and only after a display of apologetics ("I should say at this point that, in spite of my serious reservations about many of Jung's theories and the highly reductive uses to which they're often put by his followers . . . " and so on). Schechter's thesis—that modern horror is properly seen as the folklore of our day—is one with important implications for both psychoanalytically based film theory and for the Frankfurt School critique of popular culture. It is one thing to leave those implications to others (every project has a right to its limits), but quite another to denigrate and dismiss, as Schechter repeatedly does, the issues that his own work raises. As a demonstration of the folkloric connections of modern horror, Schechter's book succeeds excellently and is a welcome (and readable) contribution. As a contribution to film theory or popular culture theory, it is unilluminating—on occasion outright obfuscating. As a set of specific analyses, it is at odds with its own project.

CAROL J. CLOVER

Roberto Rossellini

By Peter Brunette. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. $14.95 paper.

As Peter Brunette paradoxically observes in this excellent study, "Roberto Rossellini is perhaps the greatest unknown director who ever lived." One of the founding fathers of Italian neorealism, creator of *Paisan* and *Open City*, bold experimenter in television and a profound influence on the careers of many other film-makers (Godard, Truffaut, Olmi, Pontecorvo, and the Taviani brothers, to name just a few) he is sadly best known to most ordinary film-goers as the man who had the "notorious" love affair with Ingrid Bergman. Few of his films are revived, his writings and interviews have gone untranslated, and books in English on the director have been virtually nonexistent.

Happily, this situation has now been rectified with the publication of Brunette's work. The product of eight years of research, the book is a careful chronological study of all the director's films, including much fascinating information on their history and production. Brunette comments intelligently on each film and wisely avoids taking any one critical approach. As he points out, criticism of Rossellini has often failed to come to grips with the complexities of this director by attempting to fit him into a single critical methodology. He has been seen as either the founder of neorealism or (because of his later films' stylistic innovations) a failed realist, either a Marxist (because of the societal concerns in some of his films) or a bourgeois Christian phenomenologist (because of his imaginative elements in others). Simply stated, Rossellini has often been dismissed because he was always experimenting and therefore never appeared safely consistent. With great subtlety and sophistication Brunette applies textural, structural, historical, and auteurist analysis where appropriate. In the process, he reveals a director whose films are far more rich than narrow-minded detractors have been able

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to appreciate. He expertly traces Rossellini's recurrent themes (such as that of the "Coralita" or group presence which so dominates many of his films) and his techniques (such as his fascinating development and use of the Pancinor zoom lens which became so much a part of the director's later style.) In all this, the author's prose and thinking is clear and reasonable, a refreshing change from many recent film books that seem intended only for other academics.

Brunette is particularly adept at showing how Rossellini's theories matured over the years. In this he is aided by the director's numerous statements and interviews, many here translated into English for the first time. However, never does the author give the impression that his subject is above criticism. Where Rossellini's thinking seems to him misguided, Brunette is quick to challenge; his questioning helps to make the artist seem more human, while at the same time illuminating the theories.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the excellent section dealing with Rossellini's last grand project for television, the historical films which he began in the 1960's and which constitute the final phase of his career. At this time the director had become disillusioned with the possibilities of the commercial cinema and had turned to television in order to realize his plan of providing the public with worthwhile educational films based on historical fact. Usually these films revolved around a single historical figure who, in Rossellini's opinion, effectively changed his times. Augustine of Hippo, Descartes and Jesus were some of the figures profiled and the series included one film masterpiece equal to the director's greatest neorealist achievements: *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV*. Intelligent, yet difficult for the typical TV viewer, many of these films have never been seen in the United States so Brunette's descriptions and commentaries are particularly valuable. While he takes exception to Rossellini's oft-quoted statements that he was providing "historical truth" rather than artistic interpretation, Brunette is in no doubt as to the television films' importance, both to the director's career and to the medium that is so often the repository of the trivial. After reading these chapters one might conclude that if an artist as sophisticated as Rossellini saw so much in the possibilities of television as a showcase for works denied other forms of distribution, and as an educational tool in the best sense, it still might be worthwhile for other film-makers to struggle and for even a jaundiced public to hope.

TOM KING

Eros plus Massacre

By David Desser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Desser offers his study of the Japanese New Wave cinema of the 1960s as an introduction to and annotation of a film movement whose details and players (beyond such well-recognized figures as Oshima, Shinoda, and Imamura) are still largely unfamiliar to Western film scholars and audiences. His research in Japanese film archives and interviews with Oshima, Shinoda, Yoshishige Yoshida, Keisuke Kinoshita, and particularly with the documentarists Shinsuke Ogawa and Noriaki Tsuchimoto enable him to offer a wealth of previously unavailable data.

But Desser's goals are more ambitious than the description of his study as an introduction indicates. It is a film history offered as reply and alternative to those by Richie and Anderson and Noël Burch. Criticizing portraits of the Japanese cinema which see it as a "closed system" or a "unified text," Desser emphasizes the importance of social and cultural shifts and their impact on film.

Desser ties the inception of the New Wave movement to the massive protests against the renewal of the Japan-US Mutual Security Pact. He suggests that the signing of the treaty in 1960 and consequent defeat of the protests left a generational sense of betrayal and discontent which underlay New Wave explorations of politics, sexuality, and crime. Desser maintains that the bitterness left by the events of May–June 1960 was coupled with a rebellion against the restrictiveness and stylistic conformity demanded by the industry's assistant director system, wherein the assistant director was expected to learn the company system and to follow the style of the director mentor. New Wave filmmakers like Oshima, Shinoda, Imamura, and Yoshida were conscious rebels against their mentors at Shochiku Studios, breaking with established styles in concert with a developing youth culture

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toward which their university education made them especially sympathetic. These variables of politics, industry, and personality, held in common by the major New Wave directors, help unify their work and justify a description of the New Wave as a coherent movement, Desser argues.

The chapters explore the differing coordinates of the New Wave's socially engaged cinema. The fondness of the New Wave directors for criminality and delinquency, for example, is explored in a chapter on youth which discusses in principal detail Hani's *Bad Boys,* Imamura's early masterpiece *Pigs and Battleships,* and Oshima's *Cruel Story of Youth.*

Two chapters are devoted to problems of sexuality and identity and the portrayal of women. Desser offers an intriguing exploration of the incest motif and its links to eroticized, mythical conceptions of the nation-as-tribe in such films as Imamura's *The Pornographers* and *The Profound Desire of the Gods.* He suggests that cinematic archetypes of women in the Japanese cinema had already been radicalized (e.g., in the work of Mizoguchi) in earlier decades and that the New Wave repositioned these archetypes by overtly sexualizing them and linking them to antiwar subjects (*Onibaba, Red Angel, Lost Sex*) and to narratives emphasizing female awakening to self-discovery, sexuality, and power. A detailed review of the "pink film" centers on the troubling work of Koji Wakamatsu (*The Embryo Hunts in Secret, Violated Women in White, Angelic Orgasm*) whose films graphically detail male protagonists' fantasies of raping and torturing women, but control and contextualize these fantasies via Brechtian alienation devices and symbolic references to the dominant phallocentric culture. Wakamatsu's work is unquestionably the most abrasive of any reviewed by Desser and is certain to revive arguments about the repressive vs. radical nature of pornography.

Remaining chapters explore the treatment of racism and outsider minorities by the New Wave and the use of an overtly theatricalized style (e.g., *Double Suicide, Buraikan, In the Realm of the Senses*) in cooperation with the post-Shingeki theater. The discussion of attempts to give voice to voiceless minorities includes much valuable analysis of the documentaries by Ogawa and Tsuchimoto on students, peasants, pollution, and the Narita airport protests.

Because Desser attempts to trace the contours and history of the New Wave movement, and its links to literary and theatrical movements, the space available for critical analyses of individual films is necessarily compressed, cramping somewhat discussion of the formal complexities of New Wave style.

A more serious issue inheres in Desser's use of the 1950s generation of "liberal-humanist" film-makers—Kurosawa, Kinoshita, Kobayashi—as foils for the experimentation of the New Wave. Their work is criticized for its liberal-humanist ideology and ahistorical, transcendental conception of the self. He writes that "The radical individualism of the New Wave film-makers was not a bourgeois individualism which posited a transcendental subject outside culture; rather it was the assertion of a will already formed by culture struggling with that culture."

The use of Kurosawa as foil for the New Wave, while perhaps relevant in historical terms in that many of the younger directors did consider their work as a response to his, is counter to the evidence of Kurosawa's own films. Although he is not generally regarded as a political film-maker, close study of his work clearly indicates a sustained, intensive effort to grapple precisely with "the assertion of a will already formed by culture struggling with that culture." The model of the self offered by Kurosawa's films up through *High and Low* is eminently materialist, not transcendental. To miss this is to miss a potentially crucial link, perhaps even influence, between his work and the New Wave directors, despite their vociferous denials of any such influence.

In addition, to relegate the work of Kurosawa to an alternative cinematic paradigm against which the New Wave film-makers are seen as reacting is to miss the striking parallel in the situations of Kurosawa and Oshima by the 1980s. With the end of the 1960s, the New Wave cinema was collapsing, and by the 1980s Oshima would express great disappointment with the failure of a potential for revolutionary change in Japan, while Kurosawa would come to believe that the world was impervious to change. The fragmentation of narrative in Oshima's 1970 production of *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* is traced by Desser to the failure of political aspirations, and it is echoed by the fragmentation and pessimism of Kurosawa's *Dodeskaden,* also in 1970.

At the least, if the failure of Kurosawa's model of an engaged cinema is tied to its reliance upon the ideology of "liberal-humanism," then the similar straits in which Oshima found his work must raise questions about the Brechtian project and its efficacy for depicting or contributing to social change. Theories and models of political cinema should not be co-extensive with the Brechtian project alone. By omitting Kurosawa's political cinema as an important generational link to the New Wave, the movement comes to seem more cinematically self-contained than it perhaps is.

Aside from this problem, Desser's work begins to fill an important gap in the scholarship on Japanese film by describing the movement in abundant detail, by clarifying the New Wave's relationship to the international cinema and by contextualizing the films in terms of the immediate cultural needs to which they are responses.

STEPHEN PRINCE

Speaking the Language of Desire

The Films of Carl Dreyer

By Raymond Carney. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. $39.50 cloth, $14.95 paper

> They ever must believe a lie who see with, not thro', the eye.
>
> WILLIAM BLAKE

There is something refreshingly nineteenth-century about a man whose references regularly number Emily Dickinson, Henry James and Gustave Flaubert, who understands his critical function to be one of mediating between a difficult artist, Carl Dreyer, and the viewer-reader. In a time warp, Raymond Carney wanders, unintimidated, among alien deconstructionists, ideological interpreters, and systems of studious signification.

Surveying the literature of Dreyer study, Carney eschews a symbolic, analogic approach (arbitrary, circular, static) and disdains formalist, "parametric" tactics that divorce style from thematic content. Carney's Dreyer is a master of emotionally nuanced performance, where narrative structure serves not to replicate but to create meaning. This Dreyer continuously reshapes our comprehensions —retarding judgments, amplifying possibilities.

The film-maker's last works are singled out for close analysis: *Day of Wrath*, *Ordet*, and *Gertrud*. As in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, the central figure is always a woman, one who embodies a radical critique of society. Ostensibly such challenges may appear to be political, sexual, or historic, but these are peripheral judgments. Commonly, Dreyer protagonists—Joan, Anne, Inger, Gertrud—enjoy and suffer an affinity with spiritual forces that deny consummations in this world. Film to film the nomenclature shifts from faith to sexuality to religious love to imaginative exaltation; it regularly speaks the language of desire at intensities that cannot translate into society's tongues.

In Carney's reading of a Dreyer film, we are subjected to experiential demands that contradict our customary conventions of exposition. Close-ups, points-of-view, follow shots, all the devices regularly enlisted to sustain or to intensify interest are discarded or else minimalized. The result is visually to withdraw what would distract attention, the better to highlight a subtlety of gestures, expressions, inflections, compositions, juxtapositions. In *Day of Wrath*, shadows (unmotivated) appear on Anne's face after Herlofs Marte's death at the stake, echoing the old woman's function in the story until then. Gertrud appears in transitory, removed images like shadows on the walls and mirror reflections. She equally represents a person and an impulse. Immediately following Inger's death in *Ordet*, the child Maren adopts her mother's embracing, stroking gestures, a continuation of feminine presence in a staid, male household.

In contrast to *The Films of Carl Dreyer* where David Bordwell proposed that *Ordet*'s long takes, blockings, and camera movements serve to isolate technique from narrative content, establishing a kind of quasi-independent formal system, Carney perceives instead patterns of involved visual choreography whose intention is to underline complicated character relationships that are simultaneously interdependent and estranged. Carney's camera movements serve as supplemental, non-godlike points-of-view whose regular effect is to impose new, readjusting interpretations moment-to-moment.

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scendental Styles in Film has a long section on Dreyer, appears only once, fleetingly. Carney is disaffected by what he considers highly technical academic criticism and severely abstract stylistic analysis (7). Drawn from *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brook's phrase "the language of desire" is acknowledged, yet again merely in passing. I think this is strategically unfortunate, because other propositions from Brook might have served to indemnify Carney's vocabulary of spirits, souls, and imagination: fighting Platonisms in late-century film study. In Brook's mind, melodrama provides a kind of extended metaphor for conflicts among value-embedded systems which stand at the heart of pre-modernist literature: James, Conrad, Lawrence, Faulkner. One might add Dreyer.

Carney's Dreyer is a heroic figure whose seemingly simple stagings actually consist of artful placements immersed in metaphor. Two realities confront one another: the ineluctably physical space of bodies and kitchens and hillsides; and a no-less-real imaginative realm inhabited by each protagonist, visible to the discerning eye only by implication. (Certain problematic scenes in *Gertrud* constitute a notable exception.) Thus each Dreyer film becomes a site for something approaching warfare, although the mundane prevails. In a contest between what can and cannot be shown or said, what cannot always loses. One pictures Dreyer tempted to the imagery of Strindberg's *The Dream Play* as if by the devil, then turning away, defeated, like one of his heroines. Carney's Dreyer is the ultimate protagonist of his films, first struggling to locate a world of the inexpressible on some barren Danish field, now wresting ineffable experience from the clutches of Metz, Foucault, and Derrida.

JOHN FELL

Child of Paradise

Marcel Carné and the Golden Age of French Cinema

By Edward Baron Turk. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. $37.50

Carné reported with delight that the anagram for his name is *écran* (screen); Turk casts a psychoanalytic eye on Carné's equation of his name with the movie screen, and suggests that if the dream screen symbolizes the mother's breast, this equation reveals the fundamental stimulus of Carné's life and art: the desire for "total, unencumbered reunion" with his lost mother. Turk develops this concept, chapter by chapter, into what he calls Carné's "masochistic aesthetic"—a term he borrows from Gaylyn Studlar's work on this subject. This and two other contributions are of special interest beyond what they reveal about Carné. The second is his study of the androgyny and destabilized gender roles in these films, by which Carné, a homosexual, subverts the conventions of a culture he could not confront more directly. Third and in some ways most valuable to a wide readership is his scrutiny of French culture and politics before, during, and after the German occupation in order to demonstrate how infrequently Carné's films dealt overtly with such politically charged polarities as dominance/subservience and right/left which infected every aspect of French culture under the Germans; at the same time Turk shows how engaged Carné was personally in these issues, and how strongly his leftist, outsider's feelings are simultaneously imprinted and denied in his films.

Concerning the psychological sources of Carné's masochistic art, Turk believes that the central catastrophe of Carné's childhood—his mother's death from pneumonia when he was five years old—is responsible for his sense of alienation and unfulfilled desire. Because this motherless "child of Eden yearning to recapture a remant of lost bliss" had to wait in brothels for his libidinous cabinet-maker father as well as to go to work with him (until his grandmother and his maiden aunt took him in), he became obsessively fearful of and fascinated with the primal scene. What Turk calls primal scenes in Carné's films are those moments when a lover sees or overhears his or her beloved with a rival, thus enhancing the lover's sense of despair and loneliness, and provoking an aesthetic of incompletion, disillusion, unfulfilled desire.

Developing from Carné's contempt for his father and his primal scene fixation, the masochistic aesthetic provides an elegant resolution to the creative tension that inspired the nine films on which poet-screenwriter Jacques Prévert and Carné collaborated: it manages to link Prévert's vision of love, unity, and hope with Carné's opposing vision of separation, loneliness, and incompletion. Citing

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Gilles Deleuze on masochism, Turk suggests that a masochist's erotic pleasure is "deprived of its genitality," and transformed into a kind of " 'parthenogenetic rebirth' in which the father plays no role." Deleuze's masochist submits himself continuously to a cool, supersensuous image until he freezes desire and defers physical climax, thus bringing on dejection and mental anguish—and the need to return to that unattainable image.

The masochistic aesthetic, apparent in such well-known films of poetic realism as *Le Quai des brumes (Port of Shadows*— 1938) and *Le Jour se lève (Daybreak*— 1939), and in *Les Visiteurs du soir (The Devil's Envoys*— 1942), reaches its fullest expression in *Les Enfants du paradis (Children of Paradise*— 1945), in which a number of characters suffer this aesthetic of sadness. The most relevant example is the love of Baptiste (Jean-Louis Barrault) for Garance (Arletty). The freezing of desire and deferring of physical climax is apparent in the first of their two bedroom scenes at the hotel *Grand Relais,* when Garance tries to seduce Baptiste by unlacing her bodice, revealing her cleavage and signaling that she will remove her dress (wet from the rain). Turk suggests that Baptiste's turning his back on her and fleeing the scene while shouting "I love you!" reveals his "masochist's need for primary identification with an all-powerful, pre-Oedipal Mother," as he contemplates but defers possession of the image he worships.

In their return to the *Grand Relais* for their long-deferred night of love near the end of the film, Baptiste's "parthenogenetic rebirth" the next morning, and his regression towards masochism, are manifest in Carné's painterly image of Baptiste and Garance, the embodiment of Madonna and Child. They radiate "serenity, oneness, and absolute disengagement from earthly circumstances," as Baptiste nestles on her bosom, their eyes locked in reciprocal adoring gaze. To Turk, this image is of the "original child of paradise whose mother's purity, like that of the Virgin Mary, remains forever unimpaired"; it also may well be *écran*-Carné's dream screen projection of his own subconscious masochist's desire for a primordial alliance with the absent oral mother who, in all her pre-Oedipal phallic power, excludes the need for the father. His cinematic iconization of the mature female, from Jacques Feyder's wife Françoise Rosay to Arletty, reveals his personal engagement in the masochistic fantasy. And to be sure, Turk in calling his book *Child of Paradise* and referring to Baptiste by the same epithet establishes the association between masochists Baptiste and Carné.

At the same time Turk, like Gaylyn Studlar, sees in the masochist's dual obsession with absence and presence a model of cinematic spectatorship, since the dream screen offers its spectators the pleasure of recreating the "first fetish—the mother as nurturing environment," disavowing the actual absence of such supersensuous images and infantile feelings of omnipotence and fulfillment in the enveloping darkness, but suffering a renewed sense of incompleteness when the lights come up—the very pleasure-pain dynamic of masochism.

Turk notes also that the masochistic aesthetic which operates between Baptiste and Garance makes possible Carné's "most subversive" achievement in *Les Enfants du paradis:* viewer acceptance of Baptiste's femininity. Throughout the book Turk uncovers Carné's ways of destabilizing—at least in his films—the rigid codes of gender behavior which were especially constricting for a homosexual between the 1930s and 1970s. The resemblance between Carné and the thief-assassin Lacenaire (Marcel Herrand) in *Les Enfants* is another example of this phenomenon: both are indifferent to women, both declare Arletty/Garance a dear friend, both share their highest moments with men, and both direct theatrical coups. Carné's were not broad and obvious signals of sexual preference, as Cocteau's were, but rather were often unsettling within the confines of his conventional mainstream scenarios.

While occasionally Turk's psychoanalytic interpretation becomes over-insistent, his study of subversion of fixed gender conventions is a particularly useful contribution. From Carné's "direct and unmannered" treatment, unprecedented anywhere in 1938, of the appealing homosexual character Adrien, one of the marginals in the group who take refuge together in *Hôtel du Nord,* to the masculine prerogatives assumed by Dominique (Arletty) and Anne (Marie Déa), and his favoring men as the objects of the camera's gaze in *Les Visiteurs du soir* (1942)—not to mention the feminization of Baptiste and Lacenaire's preference for men in *Les Enfants du paradis*—Carné took greater risks with his public than he ever did on the subject of French polit-

ics. After the war, when he met young Roland Lesaffre, himself homosexual, he found a replacement for his close friend Jacques Prévert, a sympathetic if straight supporter of Carné and of his assertions of homosexual difference even after the two reluctantly ended their film partnership. Lesaffre became Carné's "principal support and inspiration" and has remained so to this day, while Carné shaped him into the star through whom he could more directly celebrate the male body and male homosensuality, as in the prize-fighter film, *L'Air de Paris* (1954), and could take real risks with social protest, as in *Les Assassins de l'ordre* (1971), about French police brutality, which received a special prize in Russia that year, while it was unofficially suppressed in France.

Until this film came out, contemporary French culture and politics were rarely the overt subject of Carné's films, though as already noted they are embedded in most of his work. His split between privately held leftist, homosexual, outsider's convictions and professional belief in patriarchal imperatives (including cruelly authoritarian tyrannies as a director, particularly of young women) meant that while he portrayed working-class people sympathetically, he clung to a relentlessly artificial, cinematically conventional style which undercut the authority of his social statement. *Le Jour se lève* in 1939 was a splendid exception, his and Prévert's first success at bringing leftist political views and an appropriately bleak cinematic style together. In this social protest story, François (Jean Gabin), a factory worker with work-related lung disease, is pursued by Fascist-looking police until he commits suicide after his despicable rival Valentin (Jules Berry) goads him to the point of murder. It is an authentic vision of the feeling of hopelessness in France, particularly among the proletariat, just after Daladier had ordered troops to put down a general strike, and just before the French and English declared war on Germany.

But with the war and the occupation, Carné and Prévert abandoned political statement. Their next two films, *Les Visiteurs du soir* and *Les Enfants du paradis,* were extravagant fantasies, costly to make in wartime, yet extremely popular. Indeed the very success of these films as well as their lack of overt anti-Nazi content no doubt contributed to Carné's undeserved censure during the hysterical and arbitrary *épurations* (purges) by the Comité de Libération du Cinéma Français in 1945, ostensibly for having signed a contract with Continental Films, the German production company run under Goebbels's aegis during World War II—a contract which he had broken as soon as he realized they had misled him in order to get him to sign. Turk cannot conceal his regret that by making these two films during the war, Carné and Prévert "retreated from clear-cut ideological expression and worked, however unwittingly, to the enemy's advantage," by making it possible for the Germans to claim that under the occupation the French film industry continued to flower. Clearly he insists on the political responsibility of the artist, even as he devotes more than a third of his book to the aesthetic, psychoanalytic, and cultural significance of that coup for the Germans, *Les Enfants du paradis.* He could not have arrived at this position lightly; readers will be struck by Turk's scrupulous pondering over the evidence—often conflicting, from letters and interviews with Carné's famous friends and colleagues in the film industry as well as from published works —in order to illuminate both the quality of Carné's films and the complexities of the French culture which has given him more honors in his old age than it ever did in his prime, yet has offered no financial support for new film projects. Surely Turk's thoroughly documented study of the childhood and the culture that stung Marcel Carné into filmic poetry is a notable achievement of this very informative, readable book.

HELEN BUTTEL

The Legend of Maya Deren

A Documentary Biography and Collected Works. Vol. 1, Part 2: *Chambers* (1942-47)

By VeVe Clark et al. New York: Anthology Film Archives/Film Culture, 1988. $22.50 paper; $40.00 cloth

With photographs, letters, interviews, articles by and about Maya Deren, and unpublished documents of many sorts, including sketches and scripts for her films—all held together by the clear and intelligent commentary of Catrina Neiman—the second installment of *The Legend of Maya Deren* chronicles the years during which Deren

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made her first four films and became a well-known figure among the artists and intellectuals of New York. The angst-ridden images and themes of isolation in her early films give no hint of the energetic, outgoing, exceedingly practical, and socially accomplished person who created an audience for her films and, in the process, prepared the way for successive waves of American avant-garde filmmakers. For the first time we have a clear sense of Deren's public presence and a fuller but far from complete picture of her private life, at the beginning of her career.

As Deren learned film-making quickly, so she also quickly arrived at a theoretical position on film, a position that changed very little during the rest of her life, as can be seen by comparing "Cinema as an Art Form," published in 1946, with "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality," which appeared less than a year before her death in 1961. One indication of how her theories took shape is the change in labels she applied to her early films: from "abandoned" (in the spirit of Valéry: "A work is never completed, but merely abandoned"), to "classicist" (by which she meant films which subordinate personal expression to the demands of "form"), to "ritualistic" (implying for Deren "de-personalization of the individual" and stylization of action so that its meaning becomes "forever valid for all time and place").

Ritual and "de-personalization" had become Deren's guiding principles by the time she completed *Ritual in Transfigured Time.* One can only speculate on the reasons for this, but it is notable that with the exception of a few of Deren's poems, there is very little in *The Legend* that could be called truly personal. What Deren herself referred to as her habitual "intellectualizations and labored analysis" proved to be excellent strategies for keeping the personal at bay and avoiding the spontaneous, deeply personal, and revealingly autobiographical dimensions of art.

Why was it so important for her to separate the artist from her art? Was the nearly obsessive orderliness she imposed on her daily life (to which several of *The Legend's* interviewees attest) evidence of her fear of unruly and disruptive thoughts and feelings? Was her stubborn dismissal of psychoanalytic or even autobiographical readings of *Meshes of the Afternoon* an after-the-fact recognition that the film was, indeed, too personal? Was her impromptu dancing at parties the one release of emotions she regarded as safe? *The Legend* does not ask, let alone answer, questions of this sort, but they will have to be answered eventually, if we are to have a proper biography of Maya Deren.

On the other hand, *The Legend* is informative and forthright on another controversial aspect of Deren's career: her indebtedness to her second husband, Alexander Hammid. The years covered in this volume are precisely the years she and Hammid were married, and the editors draw extensively—and uncritically—on his comments and those of his wife, Hella Heyman Hammid, who was Deren's principal cinematographer for *At Land* and *Ritual in Transfigured Time.* Their evidence indicates that Hammid not only taught Deren the basics of cinematography and editing while they were making *Meshes of the Afternoon,* but shared equally in all aspects of the film's conception and execution. "One of those perfect collaborations," Deren called it later. Hammid also continued to assist Deren on her subsequent films, though his help is not recognized in the films' credits. Not only had Hammid made his own personal and lyrical films before he met Deren, but his admiration for independent, experimental work in film was as great as hers and no doubt encouraged her to stick to her convictions about film as an independent art form. Hammid's essay, "New Fields—New Techniques," published in 1946, could easily be mistaken for one of Deren's, and demonstrated that husband and wife shared, in Neiman's words, "the same vision for the future of their art." If Deren had not met and married Hammid, it is quite possible that her "legend"—were it to exist at all—would not include film.

Thanks to the work of Clark, Hodson, and Neiman, we are able to watch that legend taking shape, even as Deren's film career begins. The films made their contribution, of course, but equally important was the powerful impression Deren made as a person, which is preserved in the vivid impression of her appearance and personality recorded in this volume—compounded by her own tireless efforts to promote her films and disseminate her ideas through letters, lectures, and articles, also well represented here. In these efforts Deren singlehandedly created (or re-created, if one recalls the similar efforts of Germaine Dulac a generation earlier) the

model followed by later film artists seeking a receptive and knowledgeable audience for avant-garde films. This volume is not only for fans of Maya Deren, but for everyone interested in the development of the avant-garde film movement in North America. WILLIAM C. WEES

Image Ethics

The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film and Television

Edited by Larry Gross, John Stuart Katz, and Jay Ruby. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

The relationship of ethical considerations to TV and film practice is one of the most important yet neglected topics in the field of mass media. *Image Ethics* is therefore timely and much needed.

Image Ethics is the first work to tackle the complex moral questions that arise when one person produces and uses a recognizable visual image of another. How can the public's "right to know" be reconciled with an individual's right to privacy? Are "objectivity" and "balance" the primary moral obligations of the documentarian? Discussing these and other questions from a variety of perspectives, the authors of the essays collected here explore issues such as informed consent, the rights of individuals and minorities to be represented fairly and accurately, and the rights of individuals to profit from their own image.

A solid introduction by the three editors sets the context, provides background, and introduces the key topics. These are covered in twelve essays, mostly new and stimulating—and occasionally highly provocative, such as the case studies of Wiseman's *Titicutt Follies* and of General Westmoreland's suit against CBS, and an analysis of *The Gods Must Be Crazy*.

In effect the book splits into a discussion of the still image, feature films, and news and documentary. Brian Winston's article, "The Tradition of the Victim in Griersonian Documentary," provides a historic view of this last area before concentrating on the implications of "the public's right to know." He traces the attention of British film-makers to social problems but argues that the people involved in the films, "society's victims," rarely had a voice in the films and often became simple subjects for fashionable documentaries.

In another interesting essay John Katz and Judith Katz discuss the film-makers' duty of care to friends or families who become involved in film projects. They center their discussion on films such as *Best Boy* and *Joe and Maxi*, and argue that the obligation of the film-maker to the subject may be even higher in the "family" film than in the "stranger" film because sheer family intimacy and trust has meant a lowering of guards.

Again and again in the book attention is drawn to media misuse of power. The Westmoreland case has already been the subject of various books, but the short essay on the subject by Thomas Beauchamp and Stephen Klaidman is still worth reading. Here, in the work of producer George Crile and the actions of CBS, media falsification and misrepresentation is seen at its worst.

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Image Ethics is an excellent book for documentary courses and also includes a fairly full and useful bibliography. Like all pioneer works of passion, however, it tends to overstate its case. What is missing is a sense of perspective, a touch of the real world where ethics aren't absolute, where competing interests and obligations collide, where audiences and film-makers have rights as well. In most of the anthologized essays there are no conflicts. The subject is always right and his or her interests must always be protected, and I just don't believe that's true.

In *Shoah*, for example, Lantzman interviews Nazi war criminals and then records them without their knowledge. In terms of absolute ethics this is a serious abuse of the interviewee's rights, yet seen from a broader historical perspective one can totally justify Lantzman's actions. Here one might argue that by their war actions his subjects have already forfeited their right to protection from the media.

Image Ethics is not perfect. It grew out of a conference organized by the editors in 1984 and 1985, and at times seems to lack a cohesive thrust. Again, because it is a collection of *original* papers, it lacks Calvin Pryluck's seminal essay, "Ultimately We Are All Outsiders," which opened up the whole field. Finally, although the editors are angry and concerned, they don't know what to recommend, so the book ends a trifle inconclusively.

But these are minor faults. *Image Ethics* is that rare thing, a genuine and provocative trail-blazer. It opens up pathways for others to explore more deeply, and is a vital addition to film literature.

ALAN ROSENTHAL

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Edited by Richard Abel. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988. Vol. 1, $49.50, Vol. 2, $35.00

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cultural analysis, Abel has redefined the anthology form. My own reading process of the book was a dialectic of recognition and surprise: As someone who has been writing and thinking about the French cinema for a while now, I found that I was continually gratified to see familiar names receiving the attention they deserved while, at the same time, I was constantly delighted by new and unexpected discoveries. Abel does an impressive job of making little-known or unacknowledged French texts available in English. Self-described as "the result of a long overdue examination of a significant but neglected moment in French cultural history: the emergence of French film theory and criticism before the essays of André Bazin," the book is a major addition to the small (but steadily growing) collection of books in English about the French cinema. There are far too few texts on the French cinema—either primary or secondary—for readers of English, and most of these concern the post-World War II period. Abel's "monumental" *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929* (1984) had already begun to address this lack, and this current book goes it one better: it gracefully moves between primary and secondary texts as it establishes a substantial French film-critical tradition before Bazin. The two volumes are divided into six roughly equal sections, each of which isolates a cluster of moments, themes, and arguments that crystallize within the flow of early French writing on the cinema. Each section's introduction, meticulously researched and copiously annotated, discusses what is seen to represent a "threshold in the development of French film theory and criticism as a discursive practice."

Abel's Foucault-inspired " 'archaeological' project of excavation and re-presentation" (his words) makes massive amounts of material available to an English-speaking audience. But beyond this, in developing a "portable archive" which is part history, part anthology, the book at once reconceives the form of the critical text and redefines the film historical project. In this dual format, Abel does much more in his introductions than simply present the anthologized texts; each of the periods which gave rise to these texts is discussed in detail, with explications of the various film-theoretical concepts situated in a network of discursive practices and cultural institutions of the time. Thus, taken on their own (though I warn against this), the introductions offer a concise, ongoing "critical history" of the formative years of French cinema—as an institution, as an art form, and as a language system. In each of the sections, Abel first offers a sketch of the public forum in which French film theory and criticism were articulated (this includes a comprehensive survey of all types of film writing, from mainstream newspapers to specialized journals and books). Then he discusses the cultural milieu for this film activity ("discursive and nondiscursive practices and institutions"), making connections among those issues which intersect with the project of film theory. After isolating "the central concepts, problems or questions, and aesthetic positions" which characterize the period's film writing, Abel inserts these into the flow of film-theoretical discourse, relating them to both prior and contemporary film aesthetics. In addition, each introductory section selects key moments, writers, and quotes from the anthologized texts so that the reader can resituate that article in its critical and social context when the primary work is read.

The first section—Before the Canon (1907-1914)—traces the emergence of film-critical thinking as a struggle among different conceptions of the cinema: a scientific/technological innovation, an instrument of moral instruction, a mode of mass entertainment, a new art form. Here, among others, the premodernist thinking of Leopold Survage and the theoretical writing of Ricciotto Canudo are juxtaposed with articles by filmmakers Louis Feuillade and Victorin Jasset, along with the prolific, enigmatic Yhcam, and with Georges Mèliés, who is transformed from a magician fortuitously stumbling upon the new technical apparatus to an early film theorist with a conception of cinematic structure. Section two—*Photogénie* and Company (1915-1919)—plays on the title of Louis Delluc's 1919 book to describe the establishment of a specialized field of film writing, the continuing polemic about cinema as a high or low art, the emergence of a spectrum of narrative and non-narrataive theories, and the generation of theories about film's particular aesthetic properties—theories of *photogénie* (the camera as an instrument of revelation), of musical composition, and of plastic construction. Here the seminal thinking of Delluc (for instance, on the function of landscape as a generative matrix, or on the importance of real people—"Peasants, soldiers, charwomen, milkmaids, railway workers"—as actors) establishes a tradition of realism which can be seen in even the most recent examples of French cinema, such as Agnès Varda's *Vagabond*. Writers such as Collette, Louis Aragon, Jean Cocteau, Philippe Soupault, and Blaise Cendrars are presented alongside film-makers Jacques de Baroncelli, Marcel L'Herbier, André Antoine, producer/director Henri Diamant-Berger, and Delluc himself. Music critic and historian Emile Vuillermoz, whose writing was central to those partisans of the musical analogy, is contrasted (because of his elitist conception of the audience) with painter Marcel Gromaire (whose argument for the cinema as an autonomous art suggested, in Abel's words, "a means of creating a rich and beautiful as well as useful art for the masses").

The third section—*Cinégraphie* and the Search for Specificity (1920–1924)—formalizes the debate in whose terms we have come to understand French film in the twenties, for all those who thought about the cinema (as either writers of film-makers or both) engaged in some way with the notion of its specificity. Within this arena a new polarity emerged, displacing the conflict between high and low art to a triple contrast between the subjective cinema of the Impressionists, the now overshadowed narrative cinema of the Realists, and the more plastic conceptions of Modernist cinema which emphasized systems of formal organization. Familiar names of twenties directors now appear (in addition to Delluc there are Jean Epstein, Germaine Dulac, and René Clair); articles by writers such as the art critic Elie Faure and film historian Léon Moussinac, as well as poet Robert Desnos and painter Fernand Léger, are included. The environment for film polemics had also expanded dramatically, as a fully developed film culture took hold—the ongoing publication of specialized film journals and film books, the formation of ciné-clubs. Abel emphasizes the dialectical nature of these debates, noting that texts "were often marked by contradictory assumptions. For instance, several different conceptions of language—expressive, revelatory, structuralist or semiotic—underscored their attempts to define film language." What unified these diverse positions was a nascent concept of cinematic writing, or *cinégraphie,* which Abel defines as "a concern for the unique rhythmic principles that governed the placement, duration, and interrelation of film images." (215)

In section four—The Great Debates (1925–1929)—Abel again contextualizes the polemic. By the end of the twenties, French film writing functioned as an autonomous discourse, with each position drawing on a particular history and expressing a coherent (if not always internally consistent) point of view. The polarity suggested by the section's title is again that between the narrative cinema and its multivalent antagonists, due as well to increased film activity which established both a viable alternative structure to the industry and the consequent "avant-garde" parameters which this structure implied. At one end of the spectrum was the defense of a "classical narrative cinema" engaged by Henri Fescourt and Jean-Louis Bouquet; at the other was a veritable explosion of challenges to the narrative model, whether in the form of Pierre Port's "pure cinema" or Dulac's "visual symphonies," Moussinac's attempts to create an authentic populist cinema, Epstein's experiments with narrative dislocation and spectator-positioning, or the Surrealists' dissociative juxtapositions in the service of social transformation. Texts range from such seminal Surrealist essays as Jean Goudal's "Surrealism and the Cinema" and Antonin Artaud's "Cinema and Reality" to contrasting views of Abel Gance's *Napoléon,* key texts by Dulac, Epstein, and Moussinac, and theories of the avant-garde. While the Surrealist texts are already known to English-speaking audiences, here they are contextualized within the critical discourse of the time, while the articles by Dulac, Epstein, and Moussinac, known to scholars of the French cinema, are given the exposure they so deserve.

The last two sections (the thirties) are delimited more concretely in terms of specific political, social, and economic events, and Abel is careful to explain the impact of these events on film-critical writing. "The sound film 'revolution' imposed a major transformation on the French film industry, one that altered the material bases of film production and exhibition and, in turn, threatened to reorder the very terms of discourse on the cinema." (2:xviii) And yet within the boundaries of the decade there is a further demarcation, for the period 1934–35 was strongly inflected by the economic and political changes that polarized French society into coalitions of the right (National Front) and the left (Popular Front). Abel thus makes a distinction between the two halves of the decade, noting that the social changes of the latter half "proved far more urgent and demanding" than the earlier technological shift. Even more significant to *French Film Theory and Criticism*'s project, this second volume covers a period about which (with a few important exceptions, such as the work of Jonathan Buchsbaum, Elizabeth Grottle Strebel, Leo Braudy, and Dudley Andrew) almost nothing in English exists, and whose primary texts in translation are only to be found in fragmentary and dispersed form. In this respect, the notes to Abel's preface to volume 2 present what amounts to a basic reading list on French film of the thirties, with the important addition of the invaluable work of British film scholar Ginette Vincendeau and the comprehensive referencing of all texts in both French and English that deal with the period.

The Transition to Sound (1929–1934) first poses the sound film debate in terms of an antagonism between a consolidated narrative position and its "independent" challenges. Speculative work on the possible forms and functions of the new sound film is included, from the work of Epstein and Benjamin Fondane on the relations between sound and image, the Clair-Pagnol debate over the theater-film, and the Surrealists' consideration of sound, to the leftist film critic Georges Altman's and film-maker Marcel Carné's advocacy of a people's cinema, and Jean Vigo's and Joris Ivens's elaboration of the socially committed documentary. In his introduction to the section, Abel asserts that despite their heterogeneity and distance from actual film practice, these texts

provide a foundation for both film-making (poetic realist and Popular Front films) and for the early writings of Bazin. The prefatory quotes in Culture and Politics: The Popular Front Era (1934–1939) demonstrate the mass of contradictions that characterized French society at the time, the ideological split that divided not only the French people but their films and film criticism as well. This section is the most marked by sociopolitical discourses. The texts here include sophisticated film reviews from both the right and the left, the debates around "a uniquely French aesthetic of poetic realism (as opposed to social realism)" and the subsequent conflicting definitions of cinematic realism itself, discussions of Ciné-Liberté and other alternatives to the French film industry, the left-wing Catholic journal *Esprit*'s contribution to a theory of filmic construction, and the paradoxical status of the consummate *auteur,* Jean Renoir, the "one central figure, in both his writings and his controversial film practice, [who] seemed to embody most of the opposing forces and contradictions of the debates [of the day]." (167) Also included are articles by Valéry Jahier, Georges Sadoul, and Roger Leenhardt (on the left), François Vinneuil (on the right), Maurice Jaubert (perhaps the most important composer in French cinema), and film-makers Georges Franju, Alberto Cavalcanti, and of course Renoir, among others.

This combination of introductions, texts, and notes results in an articulation and interweaving of discourses, establishing a "discursive field" in which each article helps to create a climate of inquiry; cinema is seen as a social, aesthetic, and signifying object. The short biographical notes after each entry convey information about not only the "who" of the article, but the "who else," "what," and "why." The copious and detailed notes accompanying both the introductions and the texts augment this, thereby describing the intellectual, political, and theoretical—discursive—context for the varied types of film production in France. What makes this more than the simple sum of its (history and anthology) parts is the way in which Abel approaches the "raw material" of these texts, conveying to us not simply what these texts reveal about each author's ideas, but how they reflect and refract other writings on the cinema and other cultural processes as well.

Yet, despite this discursive richness, there is, in fact, a consistent point of focus, and this is the construction of a comprehensive critical tradition of French writing about film. Out of the diverse vitality of the polemics he describes, Abel organizes an argument (or leaves it to us) about the increasing consideration of film as a system of signs, an autonomous cultural form with its own properties, determinations, and discursive strategies. Again this is because Abel's conception of history

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is not the simple narration of different aspects of French film criticism, but the suggestion of ramifications for the foundations of theory. What emerges over the course of reading is an argument concerning the unusually sustained activity of early French film theory and criticism over three decades; while no single theory can encompass the diversity of the approaches, the consistency is in the activity of theorizing itself. Each introduction takes up issues and debates of the previous "threshold" and thus contextualizes and extends the current thinking. Questions of realism, of poetic or musical construction, of cinema's social function, its audience and its authors, reappear throughout the texts, transformed by what are considered to be the chief preoccupations of the day. But this remembrance of the past is complemented by a recognition of the future; Abel is particularly skilled at suggesting the relations of these ideas to recent developments in film theory (semiotics, psychoanalysis, cognitive and social theories).

More than that, Abel is concerned with what we as film scholars do subsequent to our reading. There are several ways in which the book achieves its aim. First, its massive amount of cited material provides the groundwork for anyone interested in pursuing further research. Everything from obscure primary sources to a veritable reading list in cultural history and social theory is included in the documentation. Next, Abel continually offers suggestions for areas of related study in everything from "the notions of maleness and femaleness attributed to the early cinema" to French advertising films of the thirties, research sources included. Finally, and this is most consistent with Abel's overall conception of the book, the presentation of the texts allows readers to develop their own interpretations; we learn from the introductions, then either see the observations demonstrated in the text, draw our own conclusions, or both. "The reader can draw his or her own connections and relations among these texts and, therefore, formulate a reading or interpretation that may deviate from that which I lay out in the introductions." (1:xix)

Given this interaction between the terrain of cultural discourse and our own interpretation of it, the implications for alternative elaborations are dazzling. One can, for example, trace the antecedents of psychoanalytic film theory back to Epstein and Desnos; or, one can discover new ways to see familiar films (my personal favorite: "Film sometimes has the subversive power of a dream or a bomb" (Georges Altman on *Le Jour se lève*). The possibilities are as varied as the readers who engage with these texts. *French Film Theory and Criticism* is the first book to receive the Anthology Film Archives's prestigious Jay Leyda Prize in Cinema Studies; this is appropriate, for with this book Abel continues the tradition of excellence in film scholarship that is synonymous with Jay Leyda's name.

SANDY FLITTERMAN-LEWIS

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CAHIERS DU CINEMA, 1969-1972
The Politics of Representation
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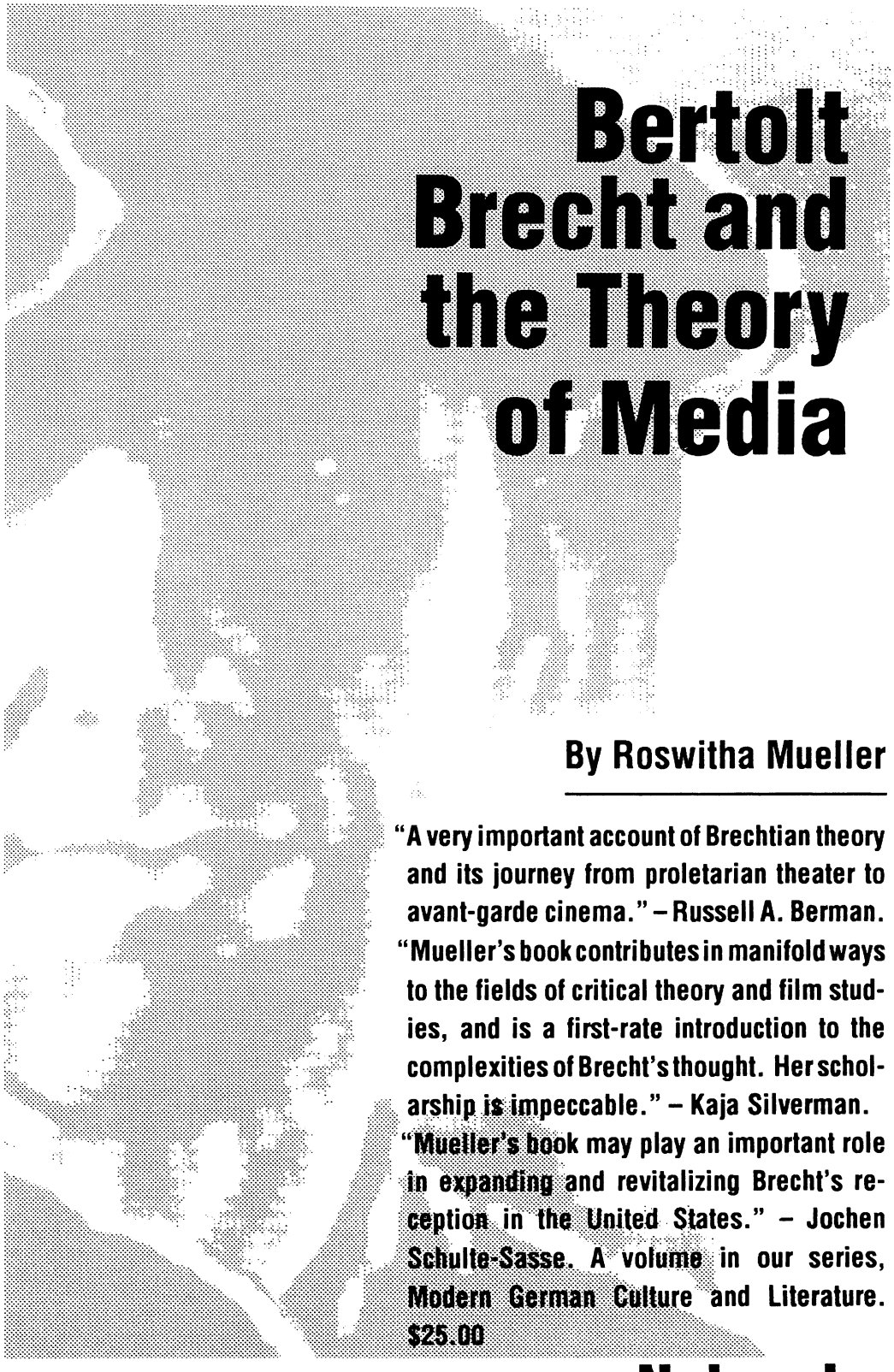

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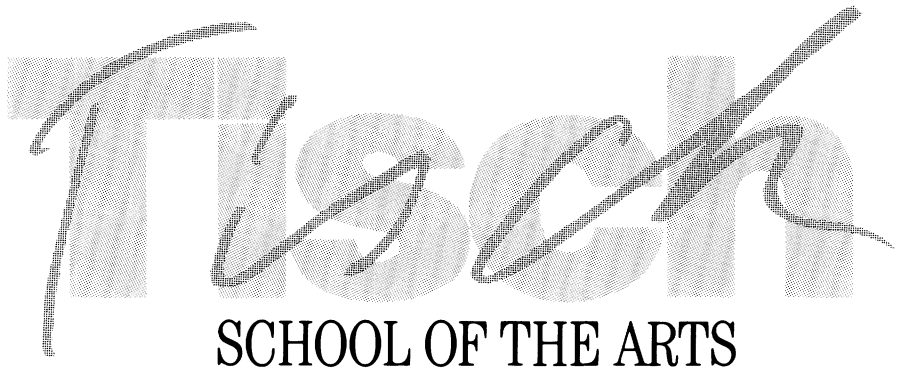

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